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Spiritual Direction

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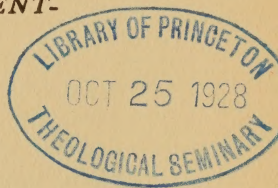
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STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT.

Spiritual Direction

*AN ESSAY IN PASTORAL THEOLOGY
IN THE LIGHT OF PRESENT-
DAY NEEDS*



BY

T. W. PYM

CANON MISSIONER OF SOUTHWARK
CHAPLAIN TO THE KING

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PREFACE

THIS book attempts to touch only part of a great subject—the personal dealings of clergy with individual people. Ministration to the sick, the handling of the child and adolescent—these are some of the departments of the subject which demand separate detailed treatment and are not specially considered here, though some of what is said may apply to them.

Part of the book refers to men only, part to women only, much to both ; the words “ he ” and “ she ” are, more often than not, used inclusively. The illustrations given, and to some extent the recommendations made, obviously apply to some one particular class of society or grade of mentality and education. It is presumed that the reader will make his own adaptations.

The book is intended to help clergy, theological students, and church-workers ; it is written from the standpoint of the Anglican Communion, but it is possible that ministers of other denominations may find parts of it of some use.

It is not written with any deliberate intention of either interesting or instructing lay people, but I hope that some may read it. It is important that there should be no unnecessary mystery on this

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subject ; as far as the present writer is concerned there are no "trade secrets" which have to be preserved. Lay readers may possibly obtain some help in difficulties ; at least they will learn what, in the opinion of one priest of the Church, they have a right to expect of their clergy and the ways in which the latter may be called upon to help.

I have had the advantage of the criticism and ideas of many informal discussion-groups of clergy on the general subject, and to their comradeship and experience this book owes a debt.

T. W. PYM.

March 1928.

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CHAPTER I

OF INTRODUCTION

THE care of souls is the primary responsibility of ministers of religion. The clergy are called to administer the Sacraments, to preach the Gospel of Christ, and to minister individually to the spiritual needs of those committed to their charge.

It is to the last of these duties that the description "care of souls" is here attached. In its widest meaning it certainly includes the second, for a sermon is not merely the delivery of a message to a crowd, but the delivery of a message to a number of individual people for any one or each one of whom it may have a particular application. If this is so then certainly the care of souls covers all religious teaching in Bible Class, Church Tutorial Class, Sunday School and also that given to Confirmation candidates or other groups.

But even if we were to limit the discussion of the term simply to the personal ministry of the clergy to the needs of individual people the subject is of first importance. For such was the personal

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ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. He explained to Nicodemus in personal interview ; He addressed Himself personally to Levi when He called on him to change his profession. At a well-side in Samaria He discussed with a woman her life and condition. He ministered to minds and consciences diseased. In Mark's account in particular the anxiety of the Teacher to escape from crowds is most noticeable. We may explain this anxiety in many ways ; the chief reason for it was certainly the desire of the Teacher to renew at the source the spiritual power through which He did His work. The demands of masses of people upon Him must have exhausted Him, and if He was not in constant and silent communion with God the Father He could not do His work properly. We may also suppose that He required time and quiet in which to think. He had the small group of immediate followers, on whose training as a group and one by one so much depended ; much time was spent with them alone. And it is not easy to resist the conclusion that He valued His association with and opportunities of addressing crowds chiefly as a means of forming contacts with individual people.

In this respect human nature has not changed ; many people, for instance, are drawn to seek advice from someone whose books they have read ; the idea that so-and-so's opinion would be worth some trouble in obtaining is suggested to my mind first because I have heard him speak or have read what he has written. But the importance of personal

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ministry is further emphasized by a fact which has constantly come to my own notice. There are many people who, apparently, can obtain the help which they require in moral or spiritual difficulty only through living contact with another mind and spirit.

One recommends a book likely to meet the need of a particular person ; but it is only when at a later stage one repeats the advice or the argument of the book by word of mouth that light breaks through. "I never thought of it like that" ; or "I'll try that ; it ought to be a help." The spoken word to the individual need does what exactly the same advice, written in a book, had apparently been unable to effect. Nor are such people stupid. What they receive at the interview is not mere repetition ; it is the same idea, but coming through the mind of someone whom they know and addressed by that mind to their particular circumstances.

It is the particular application of the more general principle which people need and are often conscious of needing. I may fancy that my own particular case does not quite fall within the generalizations of those who write or speak without knowing me personally ; if I may be given a chance of stating my own circumstances to a sympathetic adviser I shall be willing then to accept and act on his recommendation, because I shall know that in giving it to me he has myself in mind.

To lay oneself out, as a minister of religion, so to help people one by one may seem a slow and

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arduous business. All, of course, do not require it. But the readiness and the ability to perform this ministry effectively, when it is required, is a first charge upon the parish priest if he takes as pattern the ministry of our Lord.

As a matter of history the ministers of the Christian Church have followed His example in this matter throughout the centuries since His earthly life with a great variety of method. The man of God has been consulted by reason of his reputation for holiness and wisdom ; the prophet has taken upon himself to approach individual people with encouragement, warning or advice ; or again the "confessional" has occupied a conspicuous place in the life of the Church, and even kings have surrendered their conscience to a keeper. Often enough in our own country, even in modern times, the village priest has been almost the only available man of learning or education to whom the illiterate could turn for guidance in times of perplexity about any of their concerns, worldly or spiritual.

It might be, indeed it is assumed that what always has been in this matter always will be ; that there is that in the profession of ministers of religion which will draw the laity to them for advice on questions of moral or spiritual difficulty ; and that the office of priest carries with it an authority and a prestige which ensures a continuance of the care of souls. This assumption must be immediately challenged.

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¹ Other work which used to be within the sphere of the Church's operations no longer belongs to her. And on the whole we do not regret it. We do not long to see again in the seat of St Augustine at Canterbury an Archbishop who is also Lord Chancellor. We accept, with an equanimity which would have staggered our forefathers, a secular Board of Education administered by a man in whose appointment we have no more voice than may belong to us by virtue of our votes as citizens ; or again the clergy would not be pleased if they were expected to set broken limbs and prescribe the right remedy for an attack of ague. Though in medicine, law, and education the record of the Church in England is honourable, we do not regret that these spheres of activity have, one by one, passed from the administration of the Church. It is for the Church so to influence its members that it sends into those professions men and women who will be Christian doctors and legislators ; that is a task more suitable to the Church's mission in the world.

The last quarter of a century has witnessed the gradual passage of one more department in which the clergy were once pioneers ; and it is only the post-war need for economy which has slowed down the pace of this latest transition. For the government of the country or the local municipal body has been gradually taking over the activities in

¹ This and the following five paragraphs are taken from a sermon preached by the writer before the University of Cambridge on 16th October 1927.

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which Christian philanthropists pioneered. Less and less does the parish priest occupy his time in the relief of poverty or the chairmanship of the committees of clinics. It is to be hoped that the voluntary element will be retained in what is known as social service, and that men and women who draw their inspiration from their membership of a Christian Communion will still be found, as they are now found, where the most difficult and often most unpleasant work needs to be done. But that the clergy as a whole should be by degrees relieved of the responsibility of organizing social service is a matter for thankfulness ; it indicates a growth in the sense of community obligation, and ministers of religion thus have, or should have, more time and energy set free than many of their predecessors possessed for spiritual ministrations.

We can watch the departure of such activities as law or social service from the sphere of our actual administration without regret, because they do not constitute an essential part of the clergy's business in the world. Christians would feel very differently if it were suggested that any part of what is known as the care or cure of souls were passing from the clergy. It seems on the face of it absurd, but it is no more absurd than it would have seemed to suggest some centuries ago that the changes, already described, would ever take place. Yet the possibility exists and needs to be faced.

It is probable that, quite apart from modern developments in psychiatry, people frequently con-

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sult their doctor or their lawyer on some professional matter, in reality because they are seeking a moral lead ; and they have done so as a step at once less terrifying and ultimately more satisfactory than walking into the church or ringing the vicarage front-door bell. But the very great increase in the practice of psychological medicine has led many people to consult a doctor admittedly about moral and spiritual difficulties. Whatever may be our opinion about the claims made on behalf of psychotherapy as a whole, we cannot deny the probability that future generations of general practitioners will have an equipment in the technique of the science of mind, and so of conduct, superior to our own equipment if that remains at its present level. If so, the tendency already described will be accelerated. I am not referring simply to the pathological, to the case which should fall within the province of the doctor more than of the shepherd of souls, but rather to the increasing number of people who, without being in that sense abnormal, find in books or consulting-rooms the understanding and the instruction in the art of living which they have not found in confirmation-class or pulpit.

There is one piece of evidence which would at first appear flatly to contradict what has just been said—that is the great increase, during the last few years, of the practice of Confession.¹ It is certain

¹ Throughout the book this word is spelt with a capital " C " when used in reference to Confession before a priest, sacramental or auricular Confession.

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that there will always be many people who, needing the assurance of God's forgiveness and not finding it by other means, seek it in that particular way. But right direction, when required, is only second in importance to the grace of absolution. To-day's increase in the use of Confession represents an emphasis upon the priest's authority to absolve, and carries with it no guarantee of any individual priest's ability to understand and to direct. Indeed, that ability is so frequently and so obviously lacking that there is already commonly practised the custom of obtaining absolution from any priest and of seeking out some other priest, or other person, not always a priest, with whom to discuss and from whom to obtain counsel and advice.

From this stage it may not be a very long step to the stage in which people will look to the clergy for certain benefits which can be obtained through them alone by virtue of their office—while a great deal of the rest that is implied in the words "care and cure of souls" will pass elsewhere. And if that were to happen, if the ministrations of clergy were so to be narrowed down to functions which might make a minimum demand upon intelligence they could hardly complain. The standard of what is required in this matter is being raised; if they cannot raise their standard to meet the demand, then this department will one day cease to be the work of the clergy.

Thus in so far as the care of souls is peculiarly work upon which the clergy should be engaged it

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is my purpose at the moment to challenge the too easy assumption that this is a sphere of operations which must inevitably remain in their undisturbed possession ; that this at least is work which cannot pass into other hands, and that this territory is inviolate. For the change is already taking place ; it is, as yet, in its very early stages, nor is it at present exactly along the lines by which any of the previous changes, which have been mentioned, have come about ; nor is it yet beyond the possibility of arrest. Its main chance of success would lie in any continued failure to recognize that it has in fact begun.

It may be admitted at once that there would probably always be people—a minority—who required the services of a minister of religion on problems of conscience and for assistance in spiritual progress. They are the people who rely upon authority ; who approach every question along the line of the Church's direction or of Holy Scripture's revelation. Among these may be included many—as part of the minority—who are equally definite in their faith that the spiritual order of things is above and beyond the rest of life's concerns and demands a man with a sacred commission duly set apart and authorized to act in such matters. But there is an even larger body of people inside or loosely attached to organized religion to whom authority, unless it is accompanied by intelligent knowledge, does not appeal. They say " I am tired of being exhorted to be good ; I want to be told how. I do not understand what Christian morality

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really is. The general circumstances of the present age and my own particular circumstances present me with difficulties which the rules of the Church or quotations from the New Testament do not solve," or "I am told to pray but I do not quite know how to do it by myself. The Services of the Church, as rendered in many places, seem designed to prevent my co-operation and are often unintelligible to me. They represent a pitch of devotion which is quite beyond my range."

Beyond and outside these are the large majority in all classes of society who pay little or no attention to religion at all. Our trouble with them is not chiefly to get them inside our church buildings, but to know what to do for them when they are there; how to understand and provide for their needs, how to minister to them as individuals who approach the heart of religion along lines often very different from those of the average church-goer.

Now many of the younger clergy feel explicitly or dimly conscious of much that has just been said. There are also many senior clergy who, out of a ripe experience and effective ministry, could, if they had the time and opportunity, put much that they had themselves learned at the disposal of younger men. The Church of England is rich in parochial and other clergy who recognize the importance of personal ministry to the individual and have developed a method worthy of imitation. A few of them have written occasional books, and on the assumption that books, even by lesser folk, may be

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better than nothing, this volume is offered. For in no other way, at present, is there provision whereby recruits to the ministry may be trained in this particular matter; it is no one's business in particular to collect and render available the ample material which exists. Succeeding generations of clergy are left to learn by their own mistakes and gradually to amass the required experience, leaving behind them on the wayside of their pilgrimage a litter of rejected experiments and lost opportunities.

Yet much could have been told them which they need not have waited to learn, much which their own experience would have illuminated in course of time. The body of this training—the technique or method—has still to be rethought out in its fundamental principles and in all its possibility of variation.¹ Even so it would require a group, or groups of men, to compose the books in which it might be embodied. Meanwhile this book is made as a minute contribution; it represents no attempt to do more than touch small fractions of the ground. If it could be proved to be seriously wrong it would furnish yet another argument for the necessity of the training for which it is a plea; if it is good in parts, egg-like, it will have been worth while trying to put down the results of some of the study which the writer has done, and some of the experience which has come his way.

¹ *E.g.*, the work already being done along one line by the Rev. Kenneth Kirk, D.D. See *Conscience and Its Problems*, published by Longmans, Green & Co.

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS TEMPERAMENT

ANYONE who undertakes even the modest attempt indicated in the closing paragraph of the previous chapter, must be aware of his limitations. The personality of man may be limitless in its capacity as a channel for spiritual forces, but there must be limitations to any one person's executive possibilities in any one particular direction. In method of presenting the Gospel of Christ to masses of people so that an individual appeal may be felt as a result, or of ministering in private to individual needs, there must clearly be a very great variety. According to our particular cast of mind we may find very different means successful, or—if not successful—at least such as suit ourselves best to employ. Before setting out to deplore what seems to me to be the failure amongst some clergy to recognize what may be called "temperamental" differences in human nature, I wish to admit the limitations of my own range of vision. Any man may be limited by his own upbringing, his own cast of mind, or the bounds of his own practical experience.

Thus I fully realize that much of what follows may be open to the objection: "Very good, no

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doubt, for him. He's developed certain lines upon which he's very keen. But it's all no good to me. I'm made quite differently; I couldn't do as he does, if I tried. Nor do I want to try. I don't think his lines are the best and, even if they were the best, one's got to be that sort of person in order to succeed with them; and I am not that sort of person." While readily admitting the force of that argument I hope that any reader who advances it will at any rate persevere to the end of this chapter. For its purport is that all of us clergy should be from time to time asking ourselves whether we, in our ministrations, do not too readily assume that our own particular method—whatever it may be—is, or should be, of universal application, and whether we should not be more elastic in method and more ready to learn from others. For instance we often forget, or, even more commonly, we will never once admit the possibility that differences in ritual or even in the doctrine symbolized by a particular piece of ceremonial may represent fundamental differences of outlook; and that these differences will not be, indeed cannot be, overcome by mutual exhortations to "teach, teach, teach" the particular point of view for which we stand.

It is probable that what I call this matter of "religious temperament," is often overlooked by people who are called "extremists." It has not often found a place in the long controversy over Prayer-Book revision, yet it has been, consciously or otherwise, the driving-force in the enthusiasm of

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many who desired to see the "Deposited Book" pass into law.

The impossibility of reconciling in uniformity of worship great varieties of religious temperament may be crudely illustrated; even apart from the linguistic difficulty it is not wise to suppose that one and the same form of worship in Church Services will satisfy the needs of the average South Italian and of the average Highlander in Scotland. This would be generally admitted, yet by some of the very people who would make that admission the principle of varying temperament which underlies it is contradicted in their own practice. They seek, for instance, to impose upon all and sundry or to deny to all and sundry eucharistic vestments and the "ritual" which commonly accompanies them. For a man to seek to establish what he believes to be best in his own parish is intelligible enough, though even there he might allow for differences which are sure to exist amongst those to whom he is called to minister; however, England is a small country, tightly packed, and the person who is not temperamentally satisfied with the worship of one church can probably find another which will suit him better. Much individual hardship may result, but too much is often made of this. Let the person whose needs drive him to go, when he can, to a church five miles away instead of to the church on his own village green, spend six months overseas; in Canada or Australia he would soon learn to appreciate his good fortune at home in having *some*

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church building of his own communion, of *any* colour, at his very doors, and another church building to suit his exact taste only five or six miles distant.

But this is not the argument relied on by the man who, however tactfully, gradually and charitably seeks to lead his parish to worship in exactly the way which suits himself. For he joins a federation or association of other clergymen, whose avowed object is to make all the churches in the Church of England worship in an identical manner. One is forced to wonder whether the members of these bodies have ever faced the consequences which would result if complete success ever attended the efforts of any one of them. Though the difference between any two Englishmen may not be as great as that between a Highlander and a South Italian, it may yet be considerable ; to attempt to impose one form of worship upon every one would mean the total exclusion of a large number of people from that communion. Is this really the deliberate intention of the rank and file of those party-organizations whose leaders strain to codify our worship into an identical form ? Do they really think that the result would be a Church as Christ meant it to be, or that the Church of England would then have any solid contribution to make to the ultimate reunion of Christendom ?

To some of us who do not belong to any party-organization these are most baffling problems. Yet it is not a matter of ceremonial alone. For many

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will be found to admit that the form in which we express our worship is and must be a matter of temperament, at least in part. The father comes home from his day's work ; one child merely calls out "Hullo, Daddy" from the nursery ; the other rushes out and flings her arms round his neck. It does not follow that she loves her father more than the first ; but she is more demonstrative.

Yet it is argued that temperamental differences, though they may allow for variation in "ritual," must not be held to account for the divergence in doctrine which seems to appear between one party in the Church and another. But the facts demonstrate that insistence on one doctrinal view or another may mean enforcing upon a person what that person is literally incapable of appreciating. Very different illustrations may be given of this—and by people who are quite free of any partisan interest in or even understanding of the ecclesiastical controversies affecting the matters in question. There are many people, for instance, who cannot understand the process of sudden "conversion" and could never adapt their minds to the state of those who claim to be "saved" in that process. They do not deny the reality and the validity of that experience to these others ; but it contains no meaning for themselves, and is a language which they do not understand. Yet in the Church of England will be found those who teach that, of necessity, this particular doctrine of salvation, and its method, are chiefly, or even alone, required.

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Or again, there are those who teach as a necessary part of the whole Catholic Faith a belief in what is called "The Sacrifice of the Mass." Now these words and the doctrine which they represent leave many people absolutely cold. They do not wish to prevent others from holding the beliefs involved, if those beliefs are canonically adjudged to be within the ambit of English Church doctrine ; the last thing they wish is to be implicated controversially on the subject ; they are not Protestant party men. Yet the whole idea of "saying Masses," of "hearing Mass," or even of Holy Communion as "the offering of a sacrifice" is quite incomprehensible to them. They listen attentively to teaching on the subject ; they read books with considerable intelligence and, after all, they say : "I can't even understand what these people are driving at. There's no hook in my mind or in my religious consciousness on to which I can hang all this." And the number of those who reverently but definitely decide that this belief is not for them and turn their backs on the church buildings, where by every resort of symbolism it is proclaimed, is very large.

In neither instance are the absentees noticed, for if the priest in charge truly loves our Lord and is trying to win men to Him, his message will generally find a response. Surrounded by a congregation which is in the main temperamentally akin to himself, consorting in his spare time with other clergy of like mind, he persuades himself that what

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he stands for is the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, and that in a few more years the Catholic or Protestant movement will capture the Church. It is to be hoped that he is wrong. The battle-front sways to and fro across the centuries ; it wastes energy and distracts the Church from its true vocation. Oxford movement, Liberal revival, Protestant revival, Catholic movement, Reformation and Counter-Reformation succeed each other in waves. Each may leave some contribution to increase the rich heritage of the English Church, and none of them succeeds in its aim—to make the Church of England “ like this,” or “ like that.” For men are made differently and will continue so to be made, and the Church of Christ will be most truly Catholic when men and women of every kind of religious temperament are allowed to find in it a home in Christian fellowship.

Meanwhile, to ignore variations in religious temperament involves a failure, in many instances, to provide for individual need. This is noticeable in some of the teaching or equally in the lack of teaching about Confession. This is in many places taught as indispensable ; the word “ compulsory ” is denied by some of those who teach this, but it is hard for the plain man to distinguish any difference between the two adjectives in practice. If I am told in and out of season that only thus can my sins really be forgiven, that I shall run serious risk of adding to them if I make my Easter Communion unabsolved, if the boys in the parish are made to

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regard Confession as an indispensable preliminary to Confirmation the admission, in answer to a question, that "it is not actually compulsory" does not help me much. I am perhaps set marvelling at an attitude of mind which would be designated in any other walk of life as lacking in candour; and the same mental juggling—for so it appears to many people—is equally noticeable in those who attempt to explain away the direct references in the Book of Common Prayer (unrevised) to Confession. The plain truth is that many clergy teach, or omit to teach, on this matter according to their inclination, bias or upbringing and then argue in support of a conviction which they have already reached, not always by way of the arguments which later they advance.

Our concern here with this state of affairs is not its controversial aspect but its practical outcome. For many of us would claim that the teaching of the Church of England as plainly set forth on the subject of Confession is that "all may and some should." That "all must" or "none may" we do not find. Once this ministry is regarded as permissive without being obligatory the question of who should avail himself of it and who need not or should not is transferred from the ecclesiastical arena to that of spiritual therapeutics. It is along that line that I approach it here; it is along that line that I have reached the position which I now hold about it, honestly trying to seek no conclusion which would justify a previous bias either for or

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against the practice of Confession, and ready, I hope still, to consider fairly any fresh evidence.

My experience has definitely brought me to the conclusion that there are some (how many I do not know, nor what proportion) who should not, and others who need not "make a Confession." Psycho-analysis has been truly described as "a major surgical operation upon the mind"; as such it is not to be undergone without due need or regardless of the damage which may be done if the operation fails to achieve its purpose. Confession before a priest would certainly be for those whom I have in mind a "major surgical operation upon the moral conscience." They have been endowed with or there has grown upon them a reserve which is, as a matter of fact, their natural protection. To force them to lay bare all the sinful facts of their life may be to commit an outrage upon their personality. Sometimes it is right to prevent such people on the point of making a Confession, out of a mistaken idea of ecclesiastical obligation, from doing so. For it is not unique to find people, often of comparatively blameless life, pestered and driven into going to Confession in order to avoid having it on their conscience that they have committed sin by "not going." And this, most certainly, is the impression made upon some members of church congregations. The sound instinct of other people enables them to disregard the note of obligation in the teaching which they hear; they are sure that the teacher

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is wrong as far as they themselves are concerned, and they do not worry about it. Their vicars often worry a good deal about it—and quite needlessly. For there are a large number of men and women on whom Confession would have no such injurious effect as that implied above, yet who do not need to go. Who these are exactly will appear when we consider those who definitely should make use of this ministry.

There are to all this two answers either or both of which are commonly given by clergy or laity who advocate Confession as a universal practice. They say, and truly, that the making of a first Confession is for most people an action which makes great demands upon moral courage, and that many people deliberately or unconsciously shrink from the ordeal ; that the reasons they give to themselves for not going are prevarications, amounting to unconscious self-delusion or rationalization. Now this description is a perfectly fair estimate of the condition of many people who should go and do not. But it becomes unfair and unreasonable when it is applied universally ; for it is a very grave matter to brand as self-deceivers or moral cowards the large number of magnificent Christians who have faced this matter out and decided that they do not need to go to Confession. To make such an accusation is as unjustifiable as it would have been for a member of the fighting services during the war to maintain that all able-bodied men who stayed at home—for whatever

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reason—were physical cowards. The fact that many who should do so will not face the ordeal of Confession does not explain the position of all who refrain from it; that is to be explained in part by a fundamental difference in religious temperament which the enthusiasts for Confession insist on ignoring.

The second answer given by them follows on from the first, and it is this: admitted, they say, that there are some people who need not, and others even who should not go to Confession, it is necessary to teach Confession as little short of obligatory, for that is the only means of overcoming the reluctance of those who would not otherwise face the ordeal and yet ought to go. There is a good deal of force in this argument, and in discussion it has been put pointedly to me like this: "Your method would produce very few penitents; you would miss persuading many who should come; my method produces large numbers." But there is a twofold reply which may be made. In the first place the method of presenting the matter here recommended has had no proper trial. Teaching about Confession has been almost confined to those who go "all out" for it, and to others who have not thought out any other basis upon which to present the matter. On the other side there has been the silence of Protestant hostility to the practice; there has been no general, considered presentation other than that of Catholic tradition. If the large body who hold no extreme views in

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either direction would teach a positive presentation of the subject on the lines here suggested or on other and better lines, and if Protestant objectors could be brought to see what is objectionable and what truly valuable in Confession and would teach accordingly, the position would soon be entirely altered.

Secondly, even if this prophecy were to be falsified, I doubt both the rightness and the expediency of teaching what one does not quite believe to be true, or what is actually beyond one's authority to teach, as for example: "You really must come to Confession." Even if it were agreed—which I do not yet admit—that only by so doing can many of those who should come be brought to do so, yet surely this is better. For we must be absolutely honest about this; we have the right to give the impression that the Church expects all to make particular Confession of their mortal sins before a priest, *only* if we are fully convinced that forgiveness of sin is not possible for them outside this particular ministry. One may hold such a conviction and remain a member of the Church of England as a layman, but one may hardly teach it as a priest. For the clergy have promised, as part of their ordination vow, "to teach nothing (as required of necessity to eternal salvation) but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture." It demands something more than ordinary ingenuity to conclude from Holy Scripture that the forgive-

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ness of sin by our Father depends upon anything whatever but the mediation of Jesus Christ ; to introduce as an obligatory means of securing that forgiveness the form of Confession is to introduce something which the unecclesiastically-minded man cannot discover in the pages of the New Testament.

It might appear, in view of all this, that such Confession was formally permissive alone and that there were few or none who greatly needed such assistance. Though this implication has already been denied, it is necessary at this point to balance what has been said about unauthorized compulsion by a consideration of the sort of person who urgently needs the ministry of absolution. For the number is very large, though a true estimate of the proportion would be as difficult as it is unnecessary. There are at least three conditions of mind which seem to demand this ministry for the soul's health. I do not wish to limit the strong advisability of Confession to the three states here described ; there may be others, and in any event these paragraphs together with much that will follow in a later chapter are not to be taken as an attempt to exhaust the subject ; all they really set out to do is to open it.

1. First, there are people who need assurance of God's forgiveness and cannot obtain that assurance in any other way. They have repented truly and are trying hard to build up their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. From time to time or continuously

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they are bothered by the remembrance of past failures which seem to them to retard their present efforts. They genuinely doubt whether their own particular sin in all its circumstances is of the sort that can be forgiven. It has most gravely injured the community and the Church ; can they lightly assume forgiveness ? Or they feel that their record has been spoilt, and in that feeling they lose some of the incentive to keep their record unspoiled in future. Or it may be that this conscious struggle between “ what was and is ” and “ what might have been ” becomes intolerable, and they try, by degrees successfully, to put the past out of mind. Even if this is achieved they are less happy and less effective than they should be, often consciously restless and unconcentrated without knowing the cause ; their moral and spiritual vitality is being steadily sapped. To them the possibility of Confession and absolution is the one door through which they can escape into new and unimpeded union with God their Father. In the confessor they have someone who is sufficiently detached from the maze of their own introspection to estimate the extent and seriousness of their wrongdoing without bias ; by virtue of his office he has the authority to tell them that their sins are not such as to shut them out from God’s mercy if they are truly sorry. By virtue of his office again he pronounces over them the message of God’s forgiveness to them, and he does so with the authority of the Christian Communion which their sin has

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injured. This spoken word in their ear brings an assurance of God's forgiveness to them personally which nothing else could convey; it is "the pledge to assure them" of that which before they could not apprehend.

It is no sort of use for those who dislike the practice of Confession to protest that people like that do not exist, or that they could have found the same assurance some other way. That is merely to say "*I* am not made that way. Why is every one not made like me?" The answer is simply and quite finally that people are very different, and that it is the duty of the clergy to minister to the needs of the individual as he actually is and not as they would like to suppose that he is. The exercise of this ministry need not exalt the individual priest; he has not, as is sometimes mistakenly supposed, any power whatever of himself to forgive sins. He acts in this matter, as in others, as the authoritative representative of an institution, the Church. Any institution must have its appointed representative; a business company's cheque is no use to me unless it bears the signature of one who is authorized to draw cheques in the company's name; on any other basis business cheques would lose any value or meaning. Again, the grace of forgiveness, assured through the absolution given through a priest of the Church is not different in kind or amount to that obtained by those who do not need that particular form of assistance. To mark any special significance or

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value in particular absolution, to imply that those who dispense with it lack power otherwise obtainable is to state the obligatory nature of this ministry ; and that has already been denied.

2. Uncertainty about forgiveness, lack of peace with God, is far and away the most important justification of a Confessional rightly administered. But it is not the only condition which renders this ministry necessary. Confession is often the only solution for the man who is not conscious of any special need of forgiveness because he does not recognize sin in himself for what it really is. He may say, " Oh, well, you know, I think the parson's perpetual harping upon sin is morbid. I don't wish to make myself out better than other people, but I can't really refer to myself with any sincerity as a miserable sinner. I'm young still and comparatively innocent ; I'm not perfect, of course, but there's nothing in my life to make heavy weather about." And the reply would be : " I don't want to make you morbid ; I only want you to face things truly in order that, if there is in your life that which there should not be, you may rid yourself of it and become a more powerful person in the service of God and man. Go home and, with a pencil in your hand and a piece of paper in front of you, pretend to yourself that you are going to prepare a list of all your weaknesses of character and of all the actual sins that you have committed. Imagine to yourself that you are

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coming into church next Wednesday and will there kneel down and confess aloud to God in my presence or that of another priest all that is on that list. Though we are human fellow-sinners, like yourself, the feelings you imagine you might have at making such an admission in front of one of us will give you a deeper sense than you say you have now of how your sin appears against the background of the perfect holiness of God."

It will not be uncommon for a man so advised to return a week later and say: "You are right; I took your advice, and I do see that sinfulness has played a more important part in my life than at first I made out. But I think that making an actual Confession of it, and not only imagining it, may help me still more." Such a Confession, if made, would normally be followed by absolution, and that by the desire of the man himself. It is the dignity and formal nature of his actual avowal of sin which has helped to stimulate his penitence; and that claims an equally formal discharge.

3. It is this formality, the emphasis placed on the office of the confessor rather than on his personality which alone makes it possible for many people to obtain the advice which they feel conscious of needing, and to unburden themselves to anyone at all. This need for advice, this sense of urgent necessity to talk to someone about intimate worries is the third condition of mind which renders the provision of something like Confession

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essential in the Church. In this matter again people are very differently constituted. To some the austerity, the coldness, the awesomeness of a formal Confession are repellent. They do not wish to hide anything or keep anything back but they can speak much more freely what is in their hearts in the more friendly surroundings of vicarage-study or of the afternoon walk. To ignore this preference is to ignore a temperamental fact of great significance. But it is just as unwise to ignore the fact that there are others who cannot possibly obtain the help they need apart from the protection which the formality of the Confessional affords. It would be an unnecessary agony to them to talk intimately about themselves in the vicarage arm-chair. Many—chiefly but not only women—can only do so in an impersonal atmosphere, in a setting which emphasizes the presence of God, and guarantees them against informal intimacy with the human agent. It is no reply to this to say “But I’ve heard as many ‘Confessions’ in this house as ever the Bishop of X has heard in Church.” That is, perhaps, quite true; he has ministered, thank God, to many people who would never make their Confessions formally in Church. But what he fails to recognize is that he has been—with, no doubt, exceptions—limiting his personal ministry to people of one type of preference in this matter; in the same way the teacher who presses the Confessional on all and sundry is limiting his ministry on the whole to people of another type.

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If clergy of different persuasions were equally distributed in considered proportions over towns or other areas the existing exclusiveness in method might be held not to matter much, if at all. But there can be no such co-operation as long as there are many clergy of each persuasion who are adamantly convinced that their particular point of view is alone correct ; for they do not really wish that provision should be made for people of another type of preference to their own. And why should they desire such provision if they truly believe that the type of person for whom it is demanded does not exist, or ought not to exist ?

The theory which has been put forward of temperamental variations corresponding to ecclesiastical divisions within the Church cannot be pressed too far ; there are many exceptions. Some of these are due to the fact that many people tend to swallow whole at one gulp the complete doctrine and system of the person through whom they have been first led to a knowledge of our Lord ; it is not always the system which would actually suit them best but it is the natural, and on the whole not regrettable, outcome of gratitude towards and confidence in the person through whose human agency they have reached home. Gratitude and trust, however, do not always carry the day. A friend of mine was "converted" by Moody and very quickly became what would now be called an Anglo-Catholic. He did his own thinking for himself and found his own level, though never

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ceasing to thank God for the night on which he was led to attend a meeting of the great Protestant evangelist. And in certain respects methods of dealing with individuals are, as we shall see, very much the same in both camps. Extremes meet. There remains a difference in language—(how words do frighten!)—but both have found a universal something which meets the common need of all men and women alike.

The profound importance of variation in religious temperament and outlook has been illustrated so far in three ways. Elaboration of ceremonial helps some people in their approach to God; others it fusses or bewilders. One cast of mind depends upon one view of the Blessed Sacrament which another cast of mind is incapable of apprehending. To one person Confession is a veritable means of Grace; to another it is unnecessary and unmeaning. These variations seem to be marked by a line of ecclesiastical cleavage; but this line is much less clear than is often supposed. For people are to be found, for example, who depend upon the beauty of elaborate symbolism in public worship and do not yet need Confession; and vice versa, "The services at —— Church are most beautiful; I can really worship there. Of course, I do not accept all the teaching given, nor do I really understand it. But many people seem to be helped by it, so I suppose it's all right."

But the fact of variation in religious temperament, though most easily illustrated by well-known

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Catholic or Protestant practices, is not merely a matter of any ecclesiastical division. The differences between man and man, woman and woman are not confined to such easy classifications. Nor is it only the very definite churchman of one type or another who needs to keep himself wide awake to the widely divergent needs of human personality. As clergy we are often too much inclined to hand out general formulas instead of giving attention to people's individual needs. The classification of types given by psychologists is very useful, but even with this knowledge at his disposal a man may be too ready to label members of his flock and to give them a receipt from a particular pigeon-hole. But even this is better than a lack of discernment which would result in all-comers receiving almost identical advice.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

THE first requirement in a shepherd of souls is that he should be a man of God. He cannot expect that knowledge of human nature or careful attention to technique are anything but second in importance to his own knowledge of God. God's country must be to him a land he knows not only from guide-books or maps but from personal pilgrimage. If he is not himself in close comradeship with Jesus Christ he cannot expect to lead others. Very little is said in these pages about this first requisite, because there is a vast literature on the subject of personal holiness and devotion, and also because the first requisite, in this matter almost alone, has been allowed to obscure secondary considerations of very great importance.

It is not so in other matters. We do not excuse the unprepared sermon on the ground that the preacher is himself so good a man that he need take no trouble over his sermons. He may indeed be an inspired speaker, but to count on the aid of the Holy Spirit throughout his working life as a substitute for study and thought is a course which few would applaud. Yet in this duty of personal

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dealings with individuals there is comparatively little knowledge or observance of any method ; it is a work which, presumably, the grace of ordination will equip a man to do without any particular training. As has been already pointed out, the Church is likely to pay dearly for this neglect if it continues. The clergy cannot afford to deal with people "instinctively" and to ignore the existence of knowledge which might be acquired. And this omission implies a curious readiness to limit the work of the Holy Spirit. We should expect, rather, to discover His operation in a quickened intelligence and we should make our own corresponding effort. He will not supply the deficiencies which may exist in us simply because we will not take the trouble ourselves to supply them. In the endeavour to apply such intelligence as God has given me I offer the following recommendations. For many they need to be said but to many others they will be but the repetition of the commonplace. It cannot be denied that there exist many men in the ministry of the Church, though probably forming not a majority of the whole, who have all the intuition they need to pick up and amass very quickly the experience required ; so, too, there are men who are naturally good organizers, or preachers, or scholars. The rest of us must take more trouble than these more exceptional people require to take.

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1. *Accessibility*

This is in part a geographical requirement. The man should not confine his interviews either to his own study or to the church, but should be accessible in both.¹ The method of conveying such knowledge to his people will, of course, differ according to circumstances. But if it is conveyed by a notice pinned on to the church-door, this should be worded in such a way as to avoid the impression that personal interviews in the church itself are confined to the hearing of Confessions. The times—if any special hours are announced—when the man's home is used should not be the hours when pensioners and others, who are encouraged by administrative authorities to apply to ministers of religion, are invited to seek a clerical signature. It may be urged that in some parishes, at least, the time spent in church would be wasted, and that there is no point in remaining in the church if nobody comes. But the times, provided they are the convenient times for the people, need not in such parishes be either frequent or of long duration, provided that they are regular. They may often be chosen immediately to precede or follow occasions when one of the clergy would be in the church for some other purpose. The time may be occupied in prayer or in reading—for neither of

¹ Often that which is described in this book as the "interview" will take place in the course of parochial visiting.

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which, so many clergy complain, do they find sufficient space. The writer speaks as one who has often sat alone in a church, waiting, and has found it eventually worth while.

But the right accessibility is not only a matter of geography. Many of us give the impression that we are "too busy" to see people. If this idea is, as I believe, widespread it represents a truly appalling state of affairs, with, of course, many exceptions to it. I often find myself saying to someone: "You should go and talk to your Vicar about this," or "I advise you to go and see so-and-so"; and I am met by the reply, "I couldn't think of troubling him; he's much too busy," or "Do you think he really has the time to spare?" It is again most exceptional for anyone to ask to see me about anything without a sincere apology for making any demands whatever upon my time. This is partly a courtesy which is duly appreciated; but it is also much more than this. It represents a genuine belief that the clergy are occupied on more important business (committees, finance, preparing sermons, "taking services") than helping individuals. I always feel ashamed for myself and my calling, when a request for help is accompanied by the kind of apology just described. And I have no doubt whatever that a very large number of people who want help do not come to us because, in addition to their natural shyness, they are not at all sure that they have any right to intrude upon us their personal needs or difficulties.

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The situation cannot be righted in a moment; the clergy must by degrees remove the grounds for this misconception. It has arisen partly because they have often failed to make it as easy as possible for their people to come to them; a remedy for this has already been outlined. Moreover, the clergy actually are, in these days of shortage, very busy men and many of them are already obliged to choose between competing claims upon their time, and to turn their backs reluctantly on much which they feel they ought to be doing. All that is here suggested is that those who do not already regard accessibility to individuals as an absolutely essential character of their ministry should begin to do so and should make the difficult decision what other occupation must be displaced.

There is sometimes another explanation for "inaccessibility." Many clergy are, or feel they are, incompetent to help; or they have gradually so immersed themselves in other activities that to deal with individual need in the spiritual realm is treated by them as if it were indeed an interruption. All the help required is, in some men's eyes, provided in the Church's system; Confessions are heard in church with lightning-like rapidity one after the other. Or some formula is handed out, some text or pious cliché is quoted; a prayer is said (or not said) and the interview is over.

Another form of deterrent is the impression sometimes conveyed that the priest is not the sort of person who is likely to help. The remedy for

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this is the understanding of man's needs displayed in the sermons we preach and in the courtesy and Christlikeness which should mark our ordinary daily contact with people. People will use us if we preach a vision of God which moves them with any desire to share in it, and if in our sermons we relate belief and doctrine to the practical difficulties of daily life. But the sermon-habit out of the pulpit is a great hindrance, and it is difficult to be long in the preaching profession without becoming garrulous. In nine cases out of ten the people who seek our help need in the first instance to talk and not to be talked to. To be too busy to hear them out or draw them out is fatal ; as fatal too to classify them too quickly either on psychological or on less modern lines, and then to yield to the preaching habit and interrupt them with the little lecture which seems appropriate to the occasion.

2. *The Indirect Approach*

The title of this second recommendation is meant to apply to the seeker and not to the adviser. There is, no doubt, much to be said about the clergy's approach to their people, but it does not fall within the scope of this book ; how to visit, and in various strata of society ; to what extent to associate in the recreations of parishioners, rich or poor ; how to use the various contacts of daily life. To such questions very brief and general answers will here be given. Regard every one as a

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friend to love on an equal basis, and not primarily as "someone to be helped"; be alive, through prayer, to opportunity but do not view people with a professional eye. The impression conveyed to me by the life of Jesus is that He was interested in people for their own sake; they liked Him and invited Him to their parties. But be natural; do not try to seem other than you are. If there is anything more calculated to put off than the clerical manner it is the artificial assumption, by a clergyman, of a deliberately *unclerical* manner.

By "the indirect approach" I mean the very common tendency of people, who want a clergyman's opinion or advice, to approach the particular subject by a roundabout means. Sometimes, of course, they never get to the point at all, and it is not always their own fault. Of this indirect approach there are many forms, as there are many reasons for it. The Englishman is not prone to talk about either his soul or his morals, and when at last he makes the effort to do so he is tentative. Perhaps he is playing a round of golf with the rector, and makes a casual reference to the ivy on the church-tower; what he really wants to talk about is the religious education of his boy who is just going to a public school, or the Christian ethic—if any—on the subject of conception-control. He talks about the church-tower instead, either as a means of leading the conversation gradually on to religion, or as a means of trying out the rector. For the rector may be playing golf

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professionally, *i.e.*, as a means of talking about religion or finance ; here is his chance ; he plunges in with full details about the cost of removing the ivy, or asks his opponent why he is so interested in the outside of the church and never enters the inside ; what about his soul ? In either event the layman sheers off, recording perhaps a silent decision never to play golf with the rector again. Another kind of rector will fail to note any possible significance in the remark ; he went off duty when he put on his plus-fours. The wise rector will answer the remark quite naturally and simply, but, if he is spiritually alert as he should be—whatever he may be wearing on his legs—he will not fail to make a mental note that ivy may conceivably be a prelude to something deeper.¹

Another man, at another place, will start discussing difficulties connected with a belief in the Virgin Birth or in the physical Resurrection—but often these are not his fundamental difficulties. Perhaps he thinks that they are but, as likely as not, his basic problem is the fact of evil ; the eternal

¹ Such a remark, of course, may simply represent a kindly lay effort to choose a subject of conversation suitable for his clerical companion. Lay courtesy of this kind is as wonderful as it is fatiguing. I have seen men cudgelling their brains to choose nice subjects for me. "My father had a cousin who was a parson ; good feller, too." Or, "Do you know the Archdeacon of Blankshire ?" Neither he nor I are in the least interested either in his cousin or in the archdeacon. He wants to talk about horses, and I would much prefer that he should, but I can hardly say so.

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questions : “ Why does God allow floods and earthquakes ? ” “ What good can come out of innocent suffering ? ” “ Why does not God stop war ? ” “ How did evil enter into the scheme of One for whom it is claimed that He is almighty and all-loving ? ”—these are what really hold him back. And he may know this to be so ; if so, he advances what is to himself a less important question as a means of trying out his man ; if the treatment of his first question is sincere and sympathetic he will proceed, direct or by other intermediate stages to the main issue.

Or it may be some moral question about which he wants advice, some question of conduct. He approaches this by a most circuitous route, either deliberately because he is shy and thinks the parson may be shocked, or quite unconsciously ; for much intellectual unbelief, so-called, has its root in moral unrest. Many a man “ cannot believe ” because he does not, down at bottom, care to face the moral issues involved for him if he “ became a Christian.”

3. *Symptoms and Causes*

The last and commonest form of “ the indirect approach ” to be mentioned here is the attack on a symptom rather than a cause. The consciously-felt symptom is ill-temper, or deceitfulness, or failure to concentrate on prayer, or worry which eats away faith ; the cause is something quite different, and honestly unrecognized by the person

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who seeks advice. The adviser must help him discover the root of his trouble in order that he may apply his Christian effort in the right place. In this matter ministers of religion must study to be real doctors of the soul. The first duty and desire of a doctor of the body is a right diagnosis ; a patient comes to him, for instance, with a pain, and is chiefly anxious to be rid of the pain. The doctor regards the pain not merely as in itself an undesirable thing, but as nature's warning that the mechanism of the body is not working properly. The pain may be merely local or it may be the clue to something else. It is in the symptom as a clue or signpost that the doctor is principally interested. For if he can diagnose aright and supply a remedy for the underlying cause the symptom will automatically disappear.

In the same way the spiritual adviser must see beyond the surface trouble to the trouble which is more deep-rooted. The trouble for instance is "difficulty in praying," discovered on inquiry to consist chiefly in "failure to concentrate." Perhaps this is part of a general difficulty in concentration ; if so, that general condition (which again may have a cause) is the thing with which the adviser must deal ; he must not isolate the particular problem about prayer. Or the particular difficulty may be due to any one of different causes such as these : (a) The man does not know *how* to pray. He has read books about prayer, and he is being constantly exhorted in sermons to pray, but the detail of how

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actually he, personally, should set about it he really does not know. The cause here is ignorance.

(*b*) The man may lack the power to pray properly because of unrepented or of bitterly repented and deliberately forgotten and therefore unforgiven sin.

(*c*) There may be some intellectual difficulty which he does not himself recognise as a bar. (*d*) He may be a victim of phantasy into which he drifts each time he tries to pray.

Clearly, the remedy for D's difficulty will be quite different to that for B or C. To hand out some general formula for all who find it difficult to concentrate on prayer is, in things of the spirit, as if a general practitioner were always to prescribe the same medicine for every one suffering from a pain in the middle. Or again a penitent may confess repeated acts of deceit or of dishonesty in trifles. An educated girl when she picks up handkerchiefs or other small possessions mislaid by their rightful owners does not trouble to try and find out to whom they belong, but keeps them herself. She is thoroughly ashamed of herself about it, but continues the practice. Or an otherwise moral man is guilty, on occasions, of misrepresentation about comparatively small details of daily life. Another man confesses to overbearing manners and contemptuous dealing towards those with whom he works.

Let us suppose that such may be some of the moral maladies with which the adviser has to deal. It is surely of the first importance that he should

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know why it is that the girl behaves as she does ; fear of some kind is probably at the bottom of it, as is probably also the truth in the case of the man who deceives. And the last—is he really contemptuous and proud, or is he sheltering, unconsciously, from a sense of his own inferiority ? Such questions as these must be answered. To hand out to each a little homily on honesty, truthfulness or humility as desirable Christian virtues—to exhort to prayer or to attendance at church as the chief remedies—is simply to deal with the surface trouble and represents an exhibition of amateurism and incompetence which would be tolerated in none of the other professions.

4. *Control of the Emotions*

More will be said later on the love that clergy should bear towards their people as individuals. In helping the individual the expression of it must be carefully guarded. Many people, lonely, misunderstood, pent-up, need to be assured of tenderness and sympathy, and these they are right to expect in a representative of Christ's Church. But many a priest needs to ensure for himself a certain degree of internal detachment. An emotional atmosphere does not conduce to wise judgment or sound understanding. Above all the priest must not be "shocked." An appearance of disgust or even of undue surprise may make intolerably hard the effort of the talker to unburden himself ; or

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with another type of person it feeds the inverted self-conceit and enjoyment of spiritual ill-health which have chiefly prompted the interview.

As one should always expect the best of people so one should never be shocked at the worst in them. It does not seem likely that Jesus was ever "shocked," yet the fear of shocking the clergy keeps away from them many who want their help. The clergy are not solely responsible for all the misapprehensions which exist about them in the lay mind, but they have had their share in creating the impression that they are somewhat easily shocked.

5. *On being Thorough*

It is necessary to consider people's moral difficulties or spiritual needs against the background of the individual's past history and present circumstances. This is perhaps implied in what has already been said under the heading of "causes and symptoms," but the comparison between doctors of the body and doctors of the soul is not easily exhausted. We have already noted that the medical man or woman is concerned in the first place to make a correct diagnosis; and in the second not to hand out the same prescription to all and sundry; Confession has been already described as under certain circumstances similar to a surgical operation. The parallels can be multiplied; for instance, our people must feel that they can talk as freely to their clergy as to their doctors without any fear of

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breach of confidence. The distinction made between the seal of Confession and the seal of ordinary confidence is in some respects unfortunate; emphasis rightly placed upon the first should not detract from the importance of the second. Whether within or without the Confessional our people should be helped to understand that the discretion of their parish priest is as trustworthy as that of the local doctor or of the family solicitor.

Another parallel is in that which may be described as "the long view." The good doctor has some interest in the previous history of his patient; if the action of the heart is irregular the fact that the possessor had rheumatic fever some years ago is not considered irrelevant. Nor does the good physician prescribe a month in Madeira or a week in Brighton to someone about whom he knows, or could easily discover, that there is a financial or other bar which would render such a course impossible. Nor again does he expect in every instance that one visit and one bottle of medicine will meet the situation; recovery or progress may be more prolonged.

In spiritual therapeutics the same thoroughness and patience are often required. This is well illustrated by stating the need, not always recognized, of at least a second interview. Let us suppose that half an hour or an hour has been set apart in order to meet someone who has asked for an interview. The time allotted may have passed (as we have seen) before the visitor mentions the

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subject on which he really needs help ; it is then no use attempting to deal with it in five minutes while the man is collecting his hat and preparing his exit. Or again the problem presented may be insoluble by itself and the first meeting will pass in attempts on the part of the adviser to find the real cause ; or, the cause being plain, it becomes necessary to appreciate the general circumstances of the enquirer—home and family, environment of work and recreation. This cannot be done in a moment, and the adviser should aim at obtaining as complete an understanding as is possible. All clergy are not equally good at the art of listening ; we are tremendous talkers who naturally tend to dogmatize in spiritual matters, often before troubling to understand. Yet if we are thorough the first interview may often provide no more than our own enlightenment ; that is much. “Tell me about your work ; what’s your job ?” “What is your home ? Have you any family ? With whom do you live ?” “When did this difficulty start ? Were you like this as a boy ?” “Why do you think you are like this ? Don’t you think there is something behind it which you have got to tackle ?”

The questions asked will vary, and often brief comments will be made instead. The result will be that at least another appointment must be arranged, and the effect of the interval is generally bound to be advantageous on both sides. To the adviser it will mean space in which to think and pray and come fresh again to the duty of advice

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with a proper sense of perspective. The man who needs help will have found relief in unburdening himself; things will begin to assume a more correct proportion in his mind. He will come to the second meeting clearer-headed, better able to see the real issue, and readier to face and deal with it. Also he will often have a greater confidence in his adviser, just because the latter let him do the talking on the first occasion, did not hand out ready-made slabs of advice and said he required time to think things over.

The question of the desirability of further consultation belongs rather to a discussion of "direction," which will follow, than to general method. But as this section "on being thorough" has dealt with certain similarities between medical and spiritual practice, it might include reference to a contrast which should be marked. The physician and surgeon require strong lights; one consults them expecting to be examined in a good light and with one's face to the window. But if one wants to talk about one's character or one's spiritual affairs it puts one at a disadvantage to be treated in that way. Before the war I was once subjected to a scrutiny of the kind. I was applying for permission to visit from time to time in one of H.M. Prisons. I was placed in a very strong light, and my interviewer stood against the window, with his back to it, and shaded his face with his hand while his elbow rested on a tall desk. The position of the pieces in this game may have been accidental,

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but as he was a renowned detector of crime, I suspected that his method was full of purposefulness. What does my face give away? Why do I blush at his questions? Do my trousers bag at the knee? Suppose my hand started twitching, what then? Can he see me as I really am instead of what I hope I appear?

Such questions should never be prompted in the mind of anyone who seeks a clergyman's help—at least by the latter's conduct. What is fit and proper, because no doubt necessary, in the consulting-room or the inner parts of the Home Office cease to be respectable when copied in church or clerical study; there is such a mistake as being too thorough. The understanding of human nature which is here being urged must be humane; it must be of a sympathetic and not of a detecting quality. The adviser who makes his people feel as if he had them under a microscope will frighten them and make things more difficult for them. And this is a matter in which those who do not "hear Confessions" have something to learn from the Confessional. For there the positions of confessor and penitent are so arranged that the latter does not have to face the listener directly; there is no physical reason why their eyes should meet.

The microscopic method is as unnecessary on the adviser's side as it is unpleasant for the victim. There can be no doubt, of course, that the body and the face may reflect character and act as the index of mental processes; but apart from certain

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very obvious characteristics the outward signs may often be most misleading and, unless a man is most expert in reading the outward man, he is unwise to depend on or even to take undue notice of them. The adviser's business is to achieve inner fellowship with the person to whom he is talking and to aim at a spiritual understanding. From these ends he may be distracted by the expressions that flit across the other's face, even if he is not actually misled by them. "I could never trust a man with a mouth like that," "He never looked me in the face;"—such remarks are not worthy of ministers of religion. If we were to be assessed morally and spiritually by our own faces or other outward deportment, many of us would come out of the test very badly.

6. The Uses of Psychology

In this matter we are in a transition stage. New theories were first welcomed with prodigious interest. The popular craze for them affected many of the clergy. Then the popular interest died down, and the interest of the clergy followed suit. But the secular results of the era of popularity are permanent; much of what was called the new psychology has found, or is finding, its place in industry, medicine, child-study, education; it has profoundly affected the drama and popular literature; it influences, unrealized, the public opinion which affects to ignore or even deride it.

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The new psychology has entered the period of testing and consolidation. We have had Freud and the craze ; we have had the reaction from both. And now the experts, free from the distractions of popular clamour, are sifting the ephemeral from the more enduring and are working at the translation of theories into principles. Amongst the clergy there is a very common tendency to be swung in the reaction away from psychological interest, and there are easy and easily refutable arguments by which some justify this trend. They say, for instance, that much of what is popularly known or written about psychology in these days is morbid, because pathological ; that some of the most widely-read authors on the subject have been psycho-therapists, and that the experience of the medical profession is almost confined, in this matter, to the abnormal. They quote the clergyman whom they know who talks psychological jargon, regards his flock as a collection of so many "cases" and sees Freudian disturbances in all and sundry.

Of course there are some clergy like that ; they have been badly bitten by the craze ; in some instances they are unbalanced persons themselves, and in every instance they have received from the Church, which is supposed to have trained them, no alternative equipment for understanding and dealing with human nature. It need hardly be said that a use of jargon, a constant suspicion of the abnormal, a tendency to regard people who

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come to them as cases and types rather than as individual fellow-human beings to be loved and helped—none of these characteristics are suitable in the clergy. But to argue from such instances that some knowledge of psychology in the clergy is perforce unhealthy or inadvisable seems very stupid.

Another will say, as a friend of mine lately said to me: "All this psychology doesn't help a bit. I read the books and either I don't understand them or I find I know already all that they have to tell. One's got to be one's natural self; that's the great thing, and then with God's guidance one knows instinctively how to deal with people." He was a quite exceptional man with unusual gifts of sympathy and understanding. Also he was nearer fifty than forty years of age, with a wealth of accumulated experience. To argue from himself to the younger and less-gifted man was quite unsound.

The discredit which has befallen modern psychology is due to the very fact that it is new and is challenged as such; it has produced its inevitable excesses; it has been sadly overworked. But as the years pass the excesses are being pruned, the mistakes corrected and the balance restored; one day there will emerge a science of conduct which cannot be ignored. It would be disastrous if the clergy as a whole were to drop all interest in it in the meantime.

It is true that ministers of religion are not con-

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cerned with human sin alone ; theirs it is, as much, to help people develop themselves to their best. Their aim should be not only restoration but spiritual evolution. They are or should be more than spiritual pathologists ; their chief interest should be not healing but health, not cure but growth. Though many who seek or need their help have made a mess of their lives or are overwhelmed by personal bereavement, many others are not "in trouble" at all. But it is the greatest mistake to suppose that modern psychology is concerned merely with pathological conditions. Unless a man is specially gifted—and it is unwise for anyone too readily to make this assumption—psychology has much to teach him about the mechanism of ordinary human nature. If he fails to acquire this knowledge which is available he is making his own contribution to the ultimate failure of the Church to deal with an essential part of its ministry in the world.

Brother-clergy sometimes make some such remark to me as, "Oh, you're interested in psychology aren't you?" just as they might say to another man, "You're interested in conchology aren't you?" I always feel inclined to reply, and I sometimes actually reply: "But aren't you too? Aren't we all?" Teaching in the Sunday School or Bible Class, taking Confirmation candidates, helping the drunkard or the prodigal, leading people at different stages of the devotional life, preaching the Gospel to the outsider, even acting

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as chairman to the parochial church council, these are all in part psychological matters. For psychology is no new thing, it is merely the blessed word attached to the art of living, the study of human nature. With those interests all clergy are, from the very nature of their calling, most intimately concerned. There is what claims to be a science, and the ending “ology” is used to aid the description of it—but this is insufficient reason for discarding it together with all the other “ologies” for the study of which most of us have neither the time nor the capacity.

If we are wise we shall avoid amateur psychoanalysis like poison; we shall be careful not to accept all psychology’s stereotyped diagnoses and classifications; nor shall we apply them mechanically. We shall retranslate not only the language but also the theories of technical psychology into terms of our own religious faith, of our own experience of God and of human life. In two previous books I have made some attempt to do this,¹ and other books are available. In the present volume for much that is recommended a technically psychological justification could be advanced, but wherever possible I have avoided indicating this. And to have put the word “psychology” into the title would have been fatal to any chances of success which this book might otherwise have; so strong is the prejudice, often enough grounded

¹ *Psychology and the Christian Life*, and *More Psychology and the Christian Life*. S.C.M.

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on unfortunate experience, but often an unconscious pretext in a man's mind for excusing himself the trouble required to raise his standard and to take advantage of knowledge which is available.

CHAPTER IV

“ DIRECTION ”

MUCH that has been written in the preceding chapter might give rise to two misunderstandings which must be corrected before we pursue the general subject any further. First it might be supposed that the clergyman is here exhorted to concentrate exclusively on personal work, and to spend his life sitting about waiting for people to come to him. That is the danger of attempting to emphasize a comparatively neglected department of ministerial life and work ; it leads to the assumption that the writer thinks that one department alone important. The contrary is true.

There may be men whose vocation is to spend cloistered days, waiting for those who may need them ; there are certainly some who withdraw from the ordinary stream of life, multiply church services, and complain if the number of “penitents” who come to them does not continually increase. But that is not the vocation of the average parson nor the ideal at which he should aim. Both the ordinary parochial visiting and also the contacts made by the man who shares his people’s interests in a variety of ways give the opportunity for the

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exercise of personal ministry. But the warning here given is aimed against the condition where such a multiplication of other duties and interests in the clerical life exists that there is neither time nor thought for the essential task of providing for individual need.

The other misconception would be to suppose that what has preceded is leading up to that moral dominance by the clergy over the laity which is by many feared and detested. Why all this care about equipment and method, it might be asked, if the aim is not to help the priest establish an ascendancy over the individual conscience? As a matter of actual fact very nearly the reverse of this is contemplated. For it is only too easy to learn up lists of mortal and venial sins and to cloak ignorance of human nature and inability to help it behind the exaggerated authority of the priest's office. The increasing emphasis which is fostered in the minds of many ordination candidates and junior clergy, on the sheer authority of the priestly office, is here directly and deliberately challenged; it is challenged, that is to say, in so far as it is held by any to be a substitute for essential thought and knowledge. But before discarding the word “ direction ” let us see if it may not be reinvested with a larger content than it sometimes has.

For herein lies the double temptation of the ministerial calling. The road to dominance of some sort is shorter and easier in this profession than in any other. Thus in this walk of life the

natural human desire, which most people have, to rule, to lead or dominate is more easily and quickly satisfied than in others. For all clergy there is more scope for its exercise than there is for the average man outside the ministry. In the uncle tipping the small boy, in the junior clerk's attempt to keep his young brother in order at home, in direction and leadership given by the successful as in the petty tyranny, the generosity or the pompousness of the failure, or the comparative failure, there is an element of the same universal impulse.

That is one of the reasons why purely mechanical work is so deadening and inhuman; no human personality was built to be a machine alone. Unless there are good outlets for creativeness and for leadership, then the impulse to influence others, to make impressions on human life will find outlets in bad directions. The outlet for the clergyman is ready-made. It is true that the scope may seem to the middle-aged unbeneficed clergyman who has always worked in subordinate positions to be a scope inadequate to his powers and disappointing in its limitations; but even he and certainly, for his age, the recently ordained man has scope which men in other professions might envy. He preaches sermons to people who cannot answer back; he has his boys' or men's club to run; he has the Sunday School, Bible Class or Confirmation Class. Above all he wields the authority belonging to his office as priest; and if he is an incumbent as well

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his position is one in which autocracy is the easiest snare into which to fall.

Within the sphere of the priesthood there is a very large range within which the layman has neither the time nor inclination—nor very often the competence—to sustain a contrary opinion. The first part of the temptation, to which reference has been made, is for the “ persona ” or parson to develop himself solely within that range—even to retire within it. This is the line of least resistance. The really difficult things are those for which there is no rule of thumb. The evangelization of those who are outside the Church ; the search for a Christian solution to the many dilemmas confronting us in the field of social ethics or personal morality ; the opposition of intelligent argument to those who debate the truth or value of the Christian faith ; all these make great demands ; they do not bring any easy satisfaction. The clergyman who really grapples with these things has a hard road to tread.

It is therefore natural enough—and perhaps forgivable, though not admirable—if some of us, the clergy, fall back upon an easier line for the assertion of our authority. It is fatally easy to become engrossed in the minutiae of religious observance ; to expend activity of mind upon the acquisition of knowledge which no one can gainsay. It is true that our presentation of knowledge on historical or ceremonial matters may be challenged by other clergy who disagree, but the controversy

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which results provides just the required scope for the element of combativeness in man's make-up. This element would find its right employment in the Church's warfare against sin and indifference, disease and anti-Christ, but to go all out into that battlefield is much more arduous. It is easier to be in part busy about defending the Catholic position or the principles of the Reformation; but either of these are, in reality, side-issues (however important), and the disastrously prolonged unsettlement about Prayer-Book revision has soaked up many of our best men into this guerilla warfare.

Yet it is not the controversial aspect of this matter which is of the greater importance. The danger is rather the amount of energy and time, comparatively speaking, which are given to the development of the impulse towards authority, where that impulse can most easily be satisfied. I am not infrequently put to shame at my own ignorance or set marvelling at the strange sense of proportion of other and younger men. Someone, just ordained priest or only a few years in orders, will make some remark to me or ask of me some question which reveals a wonderful knowledge of some liturgical or ecclesiastical matter; sometimes it is knowledge which I envy, at other times it is knowledge which I devoutly hope it may never be necessary for me to acquire. The class of man I have in mind is certainly a minority of the whole; such a man may be even exceptional, but his

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numbers are on the increase. It is a form of ecclesiastical inversion, the Church looking inward on itself and not outward on the world. In the individual it is often the line of least resistance—to acquire knowledge which diligence can always amass and gives the possessor an easily achieved predominance in a sphere in which the average layman does not choose to compete.

The second part of the temptation is an extension of the first, and immediately touches the subject which we are investigating ; it is to exaggerate the authoritative aspect of the priestly office in dealing with individuals. There is, no doubt, any amount of traditional and historical argument in favour of this emphasis ; but to ignore the human element in it is to ignore a primary factor. That any class of men, particularly young men, should be, by virtue of their office, however sacred, in a position to dictate on matters of conduct and conscience to other men and women constitutes in itself a great temptation. It is, of course, as in the first instance, a temptation which is not recognized as such by those who fall unconscious victims to it.

To assume control of another person's life or of any part of it is to satisfy the urge which exists in most people to “ manage ” or, bluntly, to boss. The disadvantages on the side of the man or woman spiritually bossed have often been remarked, but the cause has as often passed unnoticed ; the cause is to be traced in part to the will to power, the impulse towards personal dominance which the

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clergy share with other human beings. Where emphasis on my office coincides with my natural impulses I should be particularly careful. Also I should remember that in this, as in much else, the appetite grows by what it feeds on and that I need to keep a watch on myself.

Therefore the first answer to be given to the question "How, in personal dealings with individual people, shall I direct?" is, simply, "Don't," if by direction orders are meant. But though I have chosen the word "direction" in this book because it is in common use, I do not mean by it, nor do many of those who employ it mean by it, anything equivalent to "marching orders." There are, of course, exceptions. Sometimes a minister of religion may find himself responsible for advising a man or woman distracted by anxiety or sorrow, or another disintegrated in will or on the verge of complete moral collapse. In such circumstances the adviser will assume responsibility and will exert what force of will he can bring to bear and, if need be, all the authority of his office to meet the situation. He will take the line "Now you must promise to do exactly as I say," and he will proceed to issue instructions as to what must or must not be done during that day, week or month. But such occasions are to be regarded as exceptional, and not as the common form.

Normally the business of a director is to help people help themselves, and to help them find God or find God more. Their dependence upon any

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human prop indefinitely is not to their spiritual advantage. They will be better served for instance, if the adviser helps them to discover the source of their difficulties for themselves and refrains from pointing it out to them. He should give clues rather than pronounce a diagnosis, and in this respect the parallel with the general practitioner in medicine breaks down. It may help to make this clear if the right and the wrong way of handling a particular situation are here illustrated. First the wrong way :

Enquirer.—“ I think my greatest weakness is failure to concentrate in prayer. I find I’m so frightfully liable to wander in my thoughts.”

Adviser.—“ You probably pray when you are too tired.”

E.—“ Yes, that must be it.”

A.—“ Well, choose another time. What about 6 p.m. ? ”

E.—“ Yes, I could manage a quarter of an hour then. Do you wish me to do that ? ”

A.—“ Yes, that would be better.”

And the right way :

E.—“ I find I’m so frightfully liable to have wandering thoughts when I’m trying to say my prayers.”

A.—“ Why do you think that is so ? How does it happen ? ”

E.—“ Well, of course, I have to stop up working pretty late, and when I start going to bed I relax

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my effort and then seem unable to secure concentration again ; I'm so tired."

A.—" I suppose we all find it harder to pray when we're very tired. Have you thought of a way out of the difficulty ? "

E.—" No. I thought you would help me with some suggestion."

A.—" I will, if you wish. But a suggestion of your own would be worth more to you than one from me."

E.—" Well, I suppose I might try and fit in some other time, a bit earlier."

A.—" That's not a bad idea. But what time could you choose ? "

E.—" Well, I might manage a quarter of an hour at about 6 p.m."

A.—" Well, think it over. Don't decide in a hurry, but if you come to the conclusion that you could and should do that, then make up your mind to it and go through with it."

But the source of the difficulty, though complicated by fatigue, may lie in something else as well. The better way of leading up to the discovery is still illustrated :

E.—" I have been trying 6 o'clock prayers for some time, but I cannot honestly say that the improvement, noticeable at first, has been maintained."

A.—" Then there's some other reason for the difficulty besides tiredness ? "

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E.—“ Yes, there must be.”

A.—“ What form do the wandering thoughts take? What exactly happens when you start to pray? ”

E.—“ Well, within a minute of starting I find I’m thinking of something entirely different, generally imagining things.”

A.—“ What do you mean? Do you generally imagine the same things? ”

E.—“ Yes, I suppose I do. At least the things differ, but they have all got to do with myself. They are sort of day-dreams.”

A.—“ Do you do this at other times? ”

E.—“ Oh, yes. Its not got anything in particular to do with praying. But I only resent it when it comes between me and God. There’s nothing wrong in it at other times, is there? ”

A.—“ That’s for you to say. Are you at other times the better for doing it? Is prayer the only part of your life it interferes with? These are the questions to which you ought to find some answer for yourself.”

On these lines the illustration might proceed. The example is chosen from one given in outline in the last chapter, but the method, with necessary variations, holds good in the main for very widely differing occasions. The enquirer learns the road to self-knowledge, and to a self-knowledge which is not morbid if its aim is the defeat of some sin or weakness in character. The adviser must of course be ready to stop him from rushing to

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obviously false conclusions, and need not evade a positive answer to some question if it is pressed upon him. There must be no rule of thumb, no failure in elasticity; it is the principle of the method which I seek to establish, not the detail of yet another formula.

There will be occasions when this principle of helping the enquirer to find the cause will inevitably mean the supply of clues to what on paper would seem to be a distinct and separate weakness of character. We are at once faced with the traditional and perfectly sound rule that a director must not "suggest sins." At first sight, to help a person discover some unsuspected weakness which is the root cause of something more obvious seems to constitute a breach of that rule. And so it will always appear to the priest who imagines that the science of spiritual therapeutics can be comprised in a handbook, and that the duties of a physician of souls can be discharged by the unintelligent administration of any set of rules. To ask a leading and irrelevant question about a sin which has not been mentioned is usually a gross presumption; it may be in effect injurious by suggesting hitherto unthought of possibilities to the person to whom the suggestion is made; it may often be at least an insult. But to help someone to find in one sin, unrecognized or not admitted, the cause or motive of another from which he seeks to escape is quite a different matter. And if to do this is counted as a breach of a technical rule on the subject, then the

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sooner we devise a set of rules more in accordance with common sense the better.

Again, the director may be asked to pronounce upon some question of right or wrong. It is reasonable enough to expect from the clergy, on appeal, a judgment on the ethics of particular actions from a Christian standpoint. But here, too, the adviser will throw back the main responsibility upon the enquirer. There are no doubt certain matters upon which he is bound to answer with certainty : “ This is wrong,” or “ That need not be in itself wrong ; it depends.” For loyalty to his commission in the Church or to the express word of our Lord demands of him a straightforward judgment, and that, as has been said, the enquirer has a right to expect. But the expectation will often go unsatisfied. How limited is the range within which an absolute right or wrong can be stated is indicated by the number of fundamental questions of conduct upon which even the leaders of organized Christianity fail to agree.

In answer to the question “ In what does the use of the Christian Sunday consist ? May I play football ? ” a bishop will be found to give an answer which, as far as its detail is concerned, is totally different to that given elsewhere by a dean. “ Is conception-control under any circumstances permissible ? ” “ Should a Christian (or a Christian nation) go to war ? ” “ Can a Christian retain shares in an industrial concern of which he suspects the conditions of employment to be in many

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respects unjust?" "Is betting sinful?" On a superficial view of the matter it would appear absurd that after nearly two thousand years of Christianity there could be a difference of opinion on any of these subjects; absurd, not because the answers to these questions are necessarily plain on the surface, but because it is so amazing that Christendom should not by now have thought or rethought them out.¹ It might well be asked—How can Christianity have any ethical teaching at all if there is no agreed Christian public opinion on these matters? Yet on such fundamental questions as these Christian opinion is greatly divided. The point of drawing attention at this point to the existing moral bewilderment on these questions is merely by way of caution to the adviser who would lay down too many moral rules and lay them rigidly upon all enquirers. The Holy Spirit, conveyed through ordination and consecration, has allowed such very different conclusions to be drawn by much better and more competent people than myself that I should be rash to assume that the conclusions to which I have myself been led are of universal application or that I am any better qualified, spiritually, to make a final moral judgment in a particular instance than the man who asks me for a moral lead.

My business is rather to help him find out what

¹ The question about conception-control is in a different category from the other questions, and will receive special consideration later.

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is the Holy Spirit's direction for himself. I must not let him suppose that Christian conduct can ever be reduced to a set of rules. It is a matter, rather, of applying principles ; no wise person will imagine that he can live out the Christian principle without forming for himself certain rules, even a whole code. On certain points the Church will assist him by suggesting the rules which have been found by experience to be a faithful embodiment of Christian principle. But circumstances may arise in which many rules may outrage the principle and not embody it at all ; and even if this does not happen Christlikeness is bigger, more difficult to attain, more exacting than any set of rules could be.

Thus it generally happens that “ direction ” does not consist in instruction as to what is right or wrong to do. The director will refer the particular question which has been presented to him to Christian principle and will help the enquirer to view his problem in the light of it. He will bring into focus aspects of the matter which might otherwise be overlooked. He will set the whole matter in right proportion and perspective. For often the person in doubt is so close up to his own problem that he cannot view it properly or temperately ; he needs to see it through the eyes of someone who is detached from its immediate implications, some one to whom the problem, as a general question, is not new. The director may help him to examine his own motives, to lay bare

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the unconscious self-deception, but he will not generally solve the problem completely, nor by issuing an instruction reduce Christian discipleship in the matter to the solitary virtue of obedience to ecclesiastical authority.

In particular, the wise director will always avoid the rôle of Providence in the important decisions to be made in other people's lives. "Shall I go to India or has Africa first claim on me?" "Mother badly wants me to be at home, but I want to do something in the world and I have the necessary qualifications. Which is the right call for me?" "Is my true vocation marriage or some service to the community?" Often a decided answer to such questions would tilt the scale finally in one direction or the other, but a decided answer must seldom be given. The director must help along the lines suggested above, and must show the person how, through communion with God, to reach a right decision; the advice to be given under this head belongs to a later chapter.

The contention has been now sufficiently argued that "direction," spiritual therapeutics, the care of souls—these do not involve the enslavement of the individual conscience to any official of the Church; there is to be neither any general abdication of responsibility on the part of the individual, nor any surrender of his conscience into the keeping of another. Indeed, good "direction" tends to emphasize the importance of the part played by the intelligence in the formation of moral judg-

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ments ; it should act as a continual spur to the intelligence, a stimulus to people to shoulder their responsibility intelligently, and, with God's help, to make their own decisions.

Though cross-references from the pathological to the ordinary are not universally sound and are open to suspicion there is a close parallel between the method here recommended and that of the psychiatrist in dealing with a patient. The latter must consult the doctor willingly ; the psychotherapist will not usually waste his time on the reluctant patient who comes to him only under very strong pressure, amounting to compulsion. The patient must have some germ of confidence in a successful outcome of the treatment, *i.e.*, he must have some degree of faith ; and he is likely to form some measure of personal attachment to the doctor who is treating him. Or, to put this another way, he is unlikely to continue consulting or to receive any benefit through a doctor whom he personally dislikes. To begin with, this confidence and attachment are positive assets to the doctor and up to a certain point they are allowed to develop. But before long the doctor begins to make the patient find his own feet and stand on them. To questions such as “ Had I better do this, or that ? ” to which he used to give the answer “ Yes ” or “ No,” he now says, “ Well, what do you think about it yourself ? ” The change in treatment is like a cold douche to the patient. Often he does not want to stand alone ; he would prefer to have

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all his decisions made for him ; he even enjoys the complete dependence upon another person.

There is in many a strain which, if stimulated into activity, may display itself in a positive pleasure in being ordered about. Where it is, as generally, a factor which is only latent, bad direction, an indulgence in autocracy on the part of the adviser may call it forth and develop it. Where this latent factor on one side is met on the other by an exaggerated emphasis on the office of priest and an unrecognized pleasure in the exercise of control over people, we get just those conditions which make for morbid states due to bad direction. And it is because these conditions do often occur that many healthy-minded people develop what becomes an unreasonable prejudice against all or any clerical "direction." It would be idle and dishonest to contend that the danger does not exist. All that I have tried to show is that direction ought not to be and need not be and, indeed, very often is not of that harmful character.

But there is a more subtle danger, not indeed of morbid tendencies but of other spiritual damage. Direction of even the sanest and wisest kind must often, as has been noticed, result from or produce an attachment (whether of respect, admiration or affection) on the part of the advised towards the adviser. If the recommendations of this chapter are not carried out there is often a risk of a man's religion becoming too dependent upon another individual. And this is a risk which may apply to

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all those who, whether in Holy Orders or not, seek to lead other men and women to Christ. All who read these lines will easily recall cases, known to them, in which the removal of A by death, estrangement, change of residence, marriage or other circumstances, has meant for B spiritual or moral relapse. The prop has been removed; B cannot get on alone. “Lead people to Christ”—that is a common phrase, a common missionary idea. We who seek to carry it out do well to remember that such leadership on our part must mean that at some point or other we ourselves will stand out of the way. Otherwise moral or spiritual leadership may mean continual standing between the individual and Christ, for ever blocking the way; B’s religion is then, most of it, second-hand; he is supported in life on another man’s faith; what he thinks at the time to be devotion to our Lord is little more than devotion to the Christian qualities of Mr A, Father X, or Miss Y. Remove A, X or Y and the main impulse has gone. It is a generally, though perhaps not universally, fair test of the solid value of personality in the organization of a parish or house of business, public school or other unit that, when the head of it leaves, it carries on with very nearly as much keenness and efficiency as when he presided over it. This is certainly the test to apply to the value of the influence exercised by one friend over another, by priest over penitent, by any minister of religion over those whom in things of the spirit he has

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faithfully led. The aim and the result of faithful influence will be that the person influenced should obtain a grasp of eternal reality, should know more of God, should find Jesus. The removal of the guide by circumstances may be a matter of regret ; it may even represent a great personal loss of happy companionship, but it will not affect the personal religion of the loser, except possibly for good, because the guide has already faithfully succeeded in effacing himself, in helping the seeker to hew out and keep to his own path to God and then to build his house upon rock.

The implications of this are worth study by the minister of religion who has not yet thought the matter through. He will guard against the temptation to control the lives of people whom he tries to help ; he will usually have it as his aim to lessen the number of occasions in any year when any one particular person resorts to him for advice ; for he will try to help them to become independent of any human prop, so that they do not need to rely upon him personally ; he will guard against the most subtle temptation himself to depend upon the reliance that others place in him or on the affection which they may feel for him. The traditional safeguard against the abuse of his position is, in certain circles, the use of the term " Father " ; the relationship which this title conveys suggests the most appropriate relationship, but it is not completely satisfactory. An earthly father expects obedience of his children ; the

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exaltation of the priest as “ he who must be obeyed ” has already been deprecated as neither the first nor best position for a minister of Christ to assume. Again, earthly parents often—and without realizing it—hate to see their children grow up ; the love of fatherhood longs still to protect and guide when the son and daughter ought to be encouraged to leave the home, or to lead their own life and make their own decisions. The inevitable passage of time brings a day when parenthood must cease to express itself in the old way ; often this hurts.

And so it is with spiritual parenthood ; it is a very wonderful privilege to be permitted by God to be the means of helping any one of one’s fellows on the road to Him. To a certain extent it often brings its own reward in gratitude, even in affection ; these rewards may be a real temptation, and we, the clergy, need to be very careful not to accept too much of them. An inner detachment has already been recommended, something of an impersonal attitude towards all whom we try to help. Love them—yes, but love them *in Christ* ; love the unattractive and the boring as well as the attractive or the more interesting. If friendship is needed for a time, let there be an element of reserve in it. Ours must be, because we are human, the pain but also, if we are true “ fathers,” the joy of seeing our spiritual children grow up and cease to need us ; our friendship, our help will in course of time cease to be necessary in the way in which

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they once were necessary to many of them. Let there be nothing on our side, no hunger for affection, no clinging to a selfish satisfaction for ourselves which shall ever hold them back from spiritual growth and true pilgrimage.

CHAPTER V

CONFESSION

IN any consideration of the subject of the last chapter—how best to help and advise the individual—there is much which holds good whether or not the “direction” is given in Confession. In the detail of the matter there are certain points which arise chiefly in connection with the hearing of Confessions; these details may have, some of them, a bearing upon spiritual therapeutics in general but it will be less confusing to consider them at once before passing on to those other details which are more obviously of general application.

It might be urged, reasonably enough, that the last page or two ignored the necessity, felt by many, of frequent absolution. “It is for that,” a priest might say, “that my people come constantly to me. Only through the office and ministry of a priest can they obtain it. Am I, in following your recommendation, to discourage them?” My answer would be first that what I have already said refers to advice to be given, and the frequency of Confession in order to obtain absolution must be discussed on slightly different grounds. I start

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from the premiss, already described, that God's forgiveness of man's sin does not universally depend upon absolution pronounced by a priest of the Church. Those who under no circumstances will reconsider this matter from the point of view from which I approach the subject will have no use for some of what follows here.

Yet it may be said at once that all clergy of the Church of England must preserve a real sense of pastoral responsibility in dealing with those of the laity who have been taught, until they are convinced, that their mortal sin *requires* priestly absolution. For such people are to be classed amongst those who definitely feel the need of forgiveness through this ministry, and, as they have been taught that in no other way can they obtain it, they are on this ground entitled to absolution as penitents. It is unpastoral and useless to deny them this and to tell them that they have been taught wrong. They may perhaps come, in course of time, to see the whole thing rather differently, but if they don't so see it, they have the right to priestly absolution, provided that the other necessary conditions are fulfilled. And if they do come to a rather different point of view it certainly will not be through the teaching of anyone who is utterly unsympathetic to their original conviction and denies to them altogether what they need.

Meanwhile we must hope for a more general emphasis, by those who teach the virtual necessity of Confession, upon the fact, as they agree, that

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this "necessity" does not, ecclesiastically, exist for those who have only venial and not mortal sins to confess. There is much time taken up in the hearing of Confessions which deal with matters which do not, even from the strictest Catholic standpoint, require priestly absolution. It is legitimate to attempt to moderate the frequency of such Confessions by telling the penitent that absolution—or at least absolution repeated once per month or week—is definitely not required. There is, of course, the chain of habit in this whole sequence; the tendency of the penitent, particularly if she is a woman, to enjoy spiritual ill-health and to magnify small offences into grave matters. This is one of the unhealthy results of Confession, which a sane and intelligent ministry and teaching could do much to correct.

Furthermore, there is in one respect a needlessly close and formal connection between "absolution and advice" in the ordinary administration of the Confessional. People are taught, certainly by implication if not in so many words, that advice is best given or more usually given (if at all) as part of the whole act which is called "Confession." This is in part due to the emphasis, already mentioned, upon the seal of Confession as distinct from the seal of ordinary professional secrecy outside it. Let us suppose that, instead of a practised penitent, someone who has just made his first Confession asked the question: "When ought I to come again?" I propose to suggest an omnibus answer

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to this question, *i.e.*, no doubt more than the answer given to any one person, and more than would be given in one breath :

“That is really for you to decide. It may be that the certainty of forgiveness and the assurance of a fresh start which you now have will carry you forward without any need to make another Confession. There are many people to whom one Confession once and for all is sufficient ; for others such a Confession at each turning-point of their lives, for instance at Confirmation, Ordination, Marriage, is what they need. You may feel you need to make your Confession more regularly, *e.g.*, three times a year, or possibly more often. At first, if you have a besetting sin, you may wish to Confess each time you relapse into it. It is important that, whatever you may decide now, you should not at any time allow yourself to be handicapped by a sense of unforgiven sinfulness. It is from that that individual absolution is designed to set you free, if you cannot find your assurance in the more general absolution given to the congregation as a whole, or in other ways. But it may be that before you decide that you need special absolution you may feel in want of help and advice. Do not, in that event, feel obliged to wait until your next time for Confession ; do not on the other hand force yourself to a full Confession in the strict sense, before you require absolution, simply in order to obtain advice. For that can be obtained at any time before your next Confession if you

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come and see me—and in church if you like—to talk over anything that is a difficulty to you.”

Definite provision should be made for the giving of counsel or advice at the time when the Confession is made, either by a talk before or afterwards or within the actual Confession. “You can see me to talk over things before or after if you like,” or immediately after the actual Confession has been made, the question, “Is there anything you specially want help about?” will often serve the purpose; and, if the latter leads to anything that seems likely to occupy more than a minute, the opportunity should be given to the penitent to sit, and a chair, suitably placed, should be ready. Many will prefer to remain kneeling; at least as many will be glad to sit, and these will so choose because it makes the conversation easier and more helpful. All the other circumstances of the conversation still provide the protection from intimacy, informality, lack of dignity which is perhaps necessary to the particular penitent. But the changed position gives just the required relaxation from the purely formal and official relationship and therefore talking is easier and more natural. At the conclusion the penitent kneels again for absolution. It is worth repeating at this point that in such discussion, if it takes place, the adviser must know what he is about; it is not an occasion for sermonettes or pious platitudes. That advisers are often incompetent to advise is one explanation why this department in Confession is so often slurred over or

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omitted altogether. I heard a distinguished physician say recently : " When my patients get on to moral subjects with me I ask them why they do not consult their clergy, and often receive this kind of answer, ' I go to Confession regularly, but never get any advice.' " My own experience corroborates this ; I often receive much the same answer from people who come to me not because they think my advice likely to be better than their confessor's, but because the latter gives them none at all. This state of affairs seems far too common.

The traditional accompaniment of absolution is an act of penance laid on the penitent by the father-confessor. It affords the penitent an opportunity of making " satisfaction " for sin committed in the past, and serves also to remind him that forgiveness of sin has little or nothing to do with freedom from punishment. He has not sought absolution in order to escape punishment. At the earliest opportunity he seeks, by an act of penance, to give proof of his sorrow for sin and of his intention to do better ; in so doing he signifies his recognition of the discipline and authority of the Church. In much of this there is good ; and yet I wish to question the value of this tradition as a general and binding custom.

It has already been implied that in many respects the " how " of Confession should not be kept in the ecclesiastical or legalistic arena but should be transferred to that of spiritual therapeutics or of psychology. If, partly as a result of new knowledge

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or greater enlightenment, it seems likely that the act of penance, laid upon the penitent, is useless or even injurious, I am not bound to administer it simply because it is part of a legacy of custom—a formula handed down to me in the Catholic Church. Our aim, as clergy, should be to do the best possible for our people, and if that clashes with a secondary aim—to do exactly what has always been done—then the first aim must be served rather than the second. It may often occur that in the case of a particular person some act of penance is really necessary; it will then be enjoined, for that reason, by the confessor. The fact of custom in the matter is no more justification for throwing it over than it is for remaining unreasonably bound by it. The fact that penance has been judged valuable in many generations of the Church's life, and is still so regarded in some parts of the Church, is a very strong argument in its favour; we cannot lightly throw it over. But we may protest against the use of that argument as binding. And it is only rationalization—that universal infirmity of the human mind—which accepts it as binding on the ground of custom alone and then afterwards acquires other reasons which may justify it; actually the "other reasons" are often against it.

These other reasons are often recognized by those who yet habitually give their penitents a penance, however light; "just something" will serve, and so just something is laid on the penitent to satisfy the requirements of the customary

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formula. The objection to such a practice is that it seems a pity to introduce anything of a purely formal nature into a ministry which, apart from the formality of a light conventional penance, is so significant. To many penitents this objection is important ; they would be glad to avail themselves, and perhaps do avail themselves, of this ministry, but regret the one part of it which lacks any realistic significance.

The objections, however, to heavier penances and to the whole idea of a penance as a universal medicine are more weighty. It gives to the individual clergyman, in his office of priest, just that kind of dominance which, as has been explained, is undesirable. It increases in some penitents a latent tendency to enjoy discipline in a morbid way. This danger is not to be derided or ignored because the explanation of it, which now follows, seems to have in it a psychological or even pathological element. Though we have agreed not to argue universally from the pathological to the ordinary it remains true that, what is, in mental attitude or nervous condition, treated by doctors as abnormal is often but the extension and exaggeration of tendencies which are common to us all. In the abnormal something has happened which has retarded development in one direction or overstimulated it in another, so that the harmony or balance of the personality is upset.

There is a pathological condition of mind which takes morbid delight in self-inflicted pain, or in

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receiving punishment at the hands of another. This delight may have a sexual significance, as the history of flagellation shows. It has its counterpart in the morbid delight taken by some in the infliction of pain upon others. The subject is unpleasant and it is unnecessary here to go further into it. It has been mentioned only because ignorance of the existence of such things is undesirable in ministers of religion. For the tendency exists in us all, latently or consciously, and should either be left unstimulated or directed into the right channels.

I have come to the conclusion that, quite generally, compulsory "discipline" administered to one adult by another, however sacred the latter's office, is not, ordinarily, desirable.¹ In so far as discipline is required it should be adopted voluntarily and, whenever possible, the mode of it should be suggested by the person who is to undergo it; it should be harnessed to a practical end, and should have reference to the future and not to the past. The obvious spiritual danger which belongs to any act of penance which is more than merely formal is that it uses up a certain amount of the moral and spiritual energy which should be put into amendment of life. Insistence

¹ An objection to this statement at once suggests itself from the practice of the Services. But penal discipline in the Army is public, not private; it is administered according to a recognized code. The Orderly Room is so unlike the Confessional as to make any fair parallel impossible.

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upon amendment of life must always be prominently in the mind of the minister. It is possible, and unfortunately too common, for penitents to return to Confession again and again and again with the same sins each time and in the same degree; and there are confessors who seem to ignore the significance of this. They continue to give absolution, and to lay down a penance. The latter is performed, and the penitent by degrees becomes insensible to the fact that no improvement in his life is being effected. He needs to be reminded that one of the purposes to be achieved through God's forgiveness and the assurance of it is real progress, however slow, in the moral and spiritual life. There is a foundation in fact, even in the Church of England, for the Protestant objection to Confession that it does not necessarily help people to be any better than they were. The objection misses the mark only because those who make it fail to recognize that the effect of Confession and of the absolution which follows it is not always, or even usually, marked by this particular defect; and that in condemning the whole because of a part, and in refusing to work out any better application of Confession than that which they condemn, they are not helping to remove the defect.

But it is only too easy for the regular father-confessor himself to forget that the grace of forgiveness is dynamic. To be forgiven of God is not merely to be brought from handicap up to scratch

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and left there, but to be sent over the scratch-line with a flying start ; it is not simply to receive a clean slate, but to receive it inscribed with the words " New Life." God's forgiveness is more than reconciliation ; it is propulsive power. The renewal of the right family relationship with our heavenly Father means a removal of the barriers which had hindered the operation of His Love in our lives. Absolution which is not followed by any amendment of life whatever suggests something still imperfect in that relationship ; true contrition has not been achieved, and for this the penitent is not always solely responsible.

Self-discipline, acts of self-denial, have an important contribution to make towards amendment of life, and this will be discussed later. Self-discipline for its own sake, or as an act of expiation for the past, is of less certain value. The doubt here raised takes us to something very fundamental in the Christian Religion—the idea of self-sacrifice. We hold that this, symbolized by the Cross, is at the heart of our religion. The self-sacrifice of Jesus was self-giving for a purpose. To die that others may live ; to enrich the life of society by the gift of ourselves ; to count ourselves in all things at least second and our neighbour first ; to be faithful even unto death—these constitute the sacrificial call which Jesus Christ makes to those who would be His disciples. Christians are right in maintaining that sacrifice in the name

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and for the sake of His fellowship is Life, and that self-denial is a creative force.

Thus the call to sacrifice oneself, as a condition of the utmost self-giving, finds a response in man's creative impulse. Jesus Christ appeals not to what is non-existent in us, but to an element in us which is capable of responding to the call. However much this element may be overlaid or atrophied in the individual or the group, it is a part, perhaps the essential part, of the divinity which is in man. God is Creative Spirit; God gave and gives Himself in the life of the world; man made in God's image reflects the creativeness which comes into being through self-giving. This fundamental possibility in man's nature finds expression at least in times of critical emergency; war, flood, other danger challenges the best in man to live, and, if need be, to die for others. In many it is a permanent element in their lives; they live unselfishly, giving themselves to the life of society, and many such draw their inspiration from the example, and their power from the indwelling presence, of Christ.

But there is no element in our nature guaranteed against misuse, no faculty which may not be distorted, no impulse which may not be degraded in its exercise. Such misuse is likely to occur whenever the impulse of self-sacrifice is exercised as, in itself, its own sufficient end. In people who would scarcely be classified as pathological there is the beginning of spiritual masochism. Self-sacrifice for self-sacrifice's sake is unhealthy, and,

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because unhealthy, unchristian ; it is a form of self-love and represents no true love of God or man. It may be right, in facing the dilemma of two alternative courses of action, to choose that which costs most ; for such a choice is a safeguard against unconscious motive of self-interest. But to make the cost to oneself of any course of action the chief argument in its favour is to lose sight of other grounds on which, perhaps, a quite different decision should be made ; this means that the sacrificial element in a man's nature is out of control and in seeking the satisfaction of that he becomes blind to the real demands of the situation upon him. In brief, self-sacrifice may be an inverted form of self-pleasing. The truly Christian course is sometimes to deny oneself the pleasure of immolating oneself, and to refuse the temptation to make others the unwilling victims of one's own passion for "unselfishness."

Discipleship means the readiness to accept the Cross, if it comes ; the readiness to live love's way even if it becomes a Via Crucis. It does not mean running around looking for crosses to carry, and finding pleasure only in the unpleasant. That is morbid, and sometimes very selfish. Thus self-sacrifice is not in itself and by itself a means to anything worth achieving, nor is it in itself a remedy for any evil. The most striking and important illustration of this truth is in the contest against the temptations which beset so many people through our common endowment of sexual desire.

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To preach self-discipline and self-control which shall lead to something positive and creative is necessary and right. To preach the glories of abstention, of "self-sacrifice," as in themselves the crown and climax of moral endeavour in this matter is often useless, is always cruel, and has resulted very often in morbidity, inversion or distortion. Harnessed to a positive aim there is great spiritual value in self-restraint ; it is in itself necessary to true spirituality, for the conflict suggested between "self-expression" and "self-sacrifice" is false. True self-expression, expressing a self that is worth anything, can only come through effort, discipline, and sacrifice ; that must always be taught. But that stark self-sacrifice, self-immolation detached from any alternative hope of creative activity can ever be an aim worth pursuing is not a gospel of life at all.

The incidence of penance in Confession does not of itself deserve the weight of guns which here seem to have been trained on it. But a consideration of acts of penance opened the door to a bigger subject of such importance that it could hardly be ignored. Meanwhile, it remains true of acts of penance that they tend to stimulate or to satisfy a God-given impulse in a direction which is not always profitable but may be injurious or, at best, wasteful. The probability of this contention can best be demonstrated by some suggestions as to the part to be played by the clergy in advising individuals on training in self-discipline. Such

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suggestions, if they are any use at all, will apply whether the advice is given in Confession or in less formal dealings with the person in need of help.

Again, I adopt as method of illustration, a set of imaginary conversations, as, for the writer, the easiest means of keeping prominent the different recommendations that have already been made :—

Adviser.—"Then you are really going to make a great effort, aren't you? Is there not something which you could do to help yourself against these repeated failures?"

Enquirer.—"Oh, yes, I simply must improve, but I don't know what else I can do except go on trying."

A.—"Well, to what do you attribute your failure more than anything else?"

E.—"I suppose it all comes down to weakness of will, in the long run."

A.—"That's probably true. If so, couldn't you strengthen your will?"

E.—"How? I don't know what you mean."

A.—"I mean by regular exercise, as one would strengthen a weak muscle of the body."

E.—"I still don't quite see your point."

A.—"Well, you might think of something in your life, which though not harmful in itself and unconnected with these other things, yet has rather a hold over you. Then, if you decided to control yourself more about that, it would help to keep you in training for being strong-willed about these other things which are harmful?"

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E.—"I see what you mean. Should I go to the pictures less?"

A.—"I don't know. Would that really mean some effort?"

E.—"Oh, yes. If I limited myself to twice a week instead of five times, and, later on, to Saturdays only, I should find it hard enough."

A.—"And do you think that self-denial would help to strengthen your will?"

E.—"Yes, I think it might. It's worth trying anyhow."

A.—"Well, try the twice a week to start with. Only remember that you suggested that. I don't want you to do it because I think it a good plan but only if you really think it a good plan yourself. And don't make a promise to me about it. But if it would help you to do so, tell me of your decision."

E.—"All right, I'll decide on that, starting with next week."

A.—"One last thing. In between now and next week think out some good way of using the time and money which you save on the pictures. There'll be extra money in your pocket at the end of the week, and extra time on your hands during the week. So make your bit of training all the more worth while by finding something interesting into which to put that time and money. Don't fritter it away."

The conversation might run on rather different lines:

E.—"I mean well, you know, but I'm so

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frightfully impulsive. Before I know where I am I have said or done something which I regret ; that, I think, is the underlying cause of my repeated failures."

A.—"Of course, impulses can be controlled more than you may think. But the great thing is to have good impulses instead of bad."

E.—"I wish I could arrange that."

A.—"There are different ways of aiming at it. One's impulses often represent very truly one's underlying self. Secure a better foundation in yourself and the impulses which spring from that self will tend, inevitably, to improve."

E.—"But how can I alter my underlying self?"

A.—"The more you dwell in your conscious mind on the example and teaching of Christ the more likely it is that your underlying self will be like Him. The impulses of your conscious life will then more probably be Christlike."

E.—"I don't quite see how I am to set about it."

A.—"You might make a better application of your attendance at Holy Communion ; and with this intention you might make a rule that you would go at least once in the middle of the week. Or you might, instead of or as well as that, use your Bible with a more definite intention of securing the same end ; again you would make some rule for yourself—to set aside a quarter of an hour at a fixed time on so many days in the week for meditation. I would try and explain how either of

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these methods should be employed in detail, if you would think it over and let me know."

E.—"Yes, something of that kind is really worth trying, if I can get some help in starting it."

Or again, the enquirer may state indiscipline as the fundamental issue. What may be termed the undisciplined life accounts for much waste and many faults such as lack of concentration in prayer, self-indulgence in many forms, "no time to pray."

The adviser might then give some such reply as the following: "Yes, I agree. If you make a serious attempt to get your daily life into a more orderly state, a great deal that you now find difficult will gradually become easier. I don't expect you have ever thought of having a rule of life; but something of that kind might be a great help to you. The actual items in the rule would be chosen, as far as possible, to help you in your particular difficulties; but the mere existence of a simple rule of life which you were trying to keep, and seriously meant to keep, would tend to steady you and would serve to remind you how essential was self-discipline in your whole life."

The detail of some of the suggestions made in these conversations must wait till another chapter. The present mention of them is intended to illustrate the kind of way in which genuine contrition for the past may be harnessed to a serious desire for amendment coupled with self-discipline. It is, of course, much easier and quicker to spend no time on anything of the kind, and to make a recom-

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mendation in which the enquirer is given no opportunity of co-operating. To set a formal penance to a penitent may take about as much time as that required to stamp an envelope. There are at any rate two sets of circumstances when the choice of some particular thing as an act of penance to be performed by the penitent may with advantage be made by the confessor. It may be that circumstances involve a delay in tackling the difficulties of the future, and that it would be of real spiritual advantage to the penitent to express contrition for the past and thanksgiving for absolution by an immediate act involving some real sacrifice. The performance of this will, no doubt, help to clinch the new resolves and to release some of the pent-up emotion which would otherwise remain undischarged. But dangers already referred to may arise if such a course is allowed to be the habitual procedure for any one penitent after each Confession.

In any event it should always be made clear that there is no "satisfaction" which man can make to God for his sin except that which consists in a new life. And if a penance is set at all it should be one that makes demands upon the moral and spiritual effort of the penitent, and not of a purely formal character. Some priests set, as part of the form, a penance which may occupy the time of the penitent in church after absolution, as clearly it is nice that he should have something definite to do. By all means let us help the individual by

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suggesting (if he requires our help) a devotional bridge across which he may pass back into daily life and work, but there is no conclusive reason why this bridge should always be the penitential psalms or something similar. Indeed, why strain the meaning of words to designate such employment of a few minutes as "Penance" at all? I admit that I have a prejudice against the word itself, provoked in part by the habit of so many to name the whole act of the confessional as "the Sacrament of Penance." Why not the ministry of forgiveness, or even the sacrament of absolution? Must we cling to translations of the Latin in such a matter?

The other clear case for the imposition of a real penance is when circumstances make it impossible for the penitent to make any material restitution whatever for some injury done to another person, and when he has this inability very much on his mind. To himself his readiness to suffer in order to put things right again, if he could, is part of his own guarantee to himself that he will not injure anyone in the same way again. Let him be told that he should pray for the person he has injured and accompany his prayer by an act of self-discipline or self-denial which he offers to God in earnest of his sincerity. As in the first instance, this should not be allowed to develop into a habit, for the state of mind just described is fertile soil for the growth of a morbid propensity for self-immolation.

Methods of training people in self-discipline, of

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helping them to lead ordered and unselfish lives are very generally needed ; it is a subject to which clergy need to give much attention as an important department of spiritual therapeutics. But any emphasis on acts of penance as a necessary condition of forgiveness, and the very title " Sacrament of Penance "—these both suggest to me an idea of God which I do not believe to be true. I do not mean that those who mark this emphasis and use this title hold untrue views of God ; it is much more likely either that I myself have failed to understand what they mean, or possibly that they have accepted this form and this title because they have felt bound to do so and have therefore not felt compelled ever to think out their general implications.

Fast days would supply another example of the acceptance of tradition unthought out. To mark Friday, the day of the Cross, and certain other days by some special act of self-denial, as a reminder of the occasion and as a useful piece of spiritual training is clearly excellent. With that purpose meatless days were originally introduced—but that was for generations to which " butcher's meat " was, for the most part, a delicacy or a luxury ; their obtainable fish was, more often than not, quite horrid ; smoking had not been invented. Nowadays meat is a staple food ; fish is easily secured and easily cooked well ; thousands and thousands of our countrymen would choose fish and chips rather than a chop ; and there is no

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church rule against the use of tobacco on Fridays. To make Fridays mean what they once meant we should need to recast radically the material of the fast. Meanwhile, it is not pointless to keep a rule of the Church, but nowadays for many people obedience is the sole virtue in the practice; this alone is admirable, but they should see quite clearly the significance of the change which has taken place. They are obeying a tradition in the letter; the spirit of the tradition, *i.e.*, the practical spiritual intention, has departed as times have changed. It is true that to some it requires an effort of self-denial to spend meatless Fridays; to others, who do not perhaps mind the change of food, the inability to secure a satisfactory meal without meat, or the difficulty of arranging it without suffering the ridicule of those with whom they work represents a sacrifice of real moral value. But this is not the plight of the majority who observe the rule.

This reference to fast days is relevant, for a father-confessor may lay on a penitent their observance, if hitherto unobserved. If he does so let him at least clearly understand what he is doing, or rather what he is not doing. It is not sure that he is requiring anything which will make the least contribution towards the penitent's capacity for self-discipline or restraint. If he wishes to help the penitent to keep his body under and bring it into subjection the strict observance of fast days, according to the Church's rule, will generally not

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help particularly to secure that end, as once it helped. It may remain a good thing to obey the rule ; but the particular spiritual end, at which the rule was once aimed, must be achieved in some other way. The whole matter is another illustration of the manner in which the shepherd of souls is beset with the temptation to use the authority of his office, and of the Church which commissioned him, unthinkingly and formally.

Among the details which belong to a discussion of Confession there is one more which must be mentioned here. Women form the majority of those who use this ministry. Lately-ordained priests are not the best people to hear the Confessions of girls and young women. The circumstances of a parochial staff, or the lack of it, do not always allow an ideal arrangement to be made in this matter. But there is certain provision which can always be made irrespective of the size of the parish or the number of priests on the staff. It is that a woman should be employed to help any girl prepare for her first Confession ; this recommendation holds good whatever the age or experience of the priest who is to hear it. There may be certain matters about which the penitent would find real difficulty in expressing herself quite honestly and unmistakably and yet with a proper reserve and regard for modesty. An older woman will enable her to arrange what she has to say and will suggest to her the words in which it may be most suitably expressed.

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The most valuable ministry of women is insufficiently employed in the realm of moral and spiritual therapeutics ; for the right woman can do much more than help young penitents prepare their Confession. She can give advice much more suitably than many men, and always more suitably than young men. It is not only the father-confessor, but other clergy too who would be wise to employ the services of women in helping women. In or out of Confession the adviser will often find himself saying : " About this (or that) I am sure that Miss M, or Mrs N, or Deaconess O would be able to help you if you would be willing to see her."

Such a course of action is not followed universally because, in part, we are not humble-minded enough. Woman's problems and woman's whole make-up are so different very often from a man's ; the young priest knows nothing of this, but, beset with the idea of the importance of his office, he either fails to advise at all or attempts to advise on matters about which he is hopelessly ignorant. He does not know, for instance, that even if he were, in knowledge, competent to advise on difficulties in the sex-development of a girl, he suffers as a young man, from a practical disqualification, in that the mere fact of a conversation with him on that subject may be harmful to her. It must not be supposed that any woman will supply the need, nor that by " the right woman " is meant simply a lady who has passed an examination on the prophet Joel or is in charge of the altar-linen and

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has an admirable knowledge of liturgical usage. Such knowledge does not, of course, disqualify, but the care of souls has nothing whatever to do with it. The right woman will often be the Deaconess or other woman Church-worker ; sometimes such a person will be the least suitable. There are many women outside the ranks of official Church-workers whose love, wisdom and knowledge would be ideally employed in co-operation of this kind ; the ministers of the Church on the whole do not sufficiently employ them, where they exist, or select, train and equip them where they are needed. The really efficient priest is probably as helpful as the right woman, but a mark of his efficiency will be that he seeks her co-operation. The right woman is undoubtedly of more service than the inefficient priest.

It has been observed that many of the points discussed in this chapter have their relevance to our general subject whether or not Confessions are heard. But they arose in the first instance in special reference to Confession. We must now pass to the consideration of other details of an entirely general character, whose importance emerges whatever may be the ecclesiastical method of the individual minister.

CHAPTER VI

DETAILS

A. The Place of Medicine

FREQUENT reference has been made to the medical profession in this book. It is important to co-operate in every way possible with the other great healing profession, and not to attempt alone work which does not properly belong to the clergy. There should be a ministry of healing in the Church, but I do not go further into this subject here because it deserves and receives treatment in separate publications. If a clergyman studies the technique of exorcism, of the laying on of hands and of holy unction, if he has himself the gift of touch, let him practise the ministry of healing if he is called to it. He will be careful to co-operate with the medical attendant in each case, if possible ; he will rid himself of the irritating, because unscientific, inconsequence of the amateur. Where these conditions have been observed great spiritual advantage has been proved to result from this ministry ; the renewal of spirit has been known to affect the mechanism of the body most beneficially through the renewed confidence, peace and hope-

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fulness with which the mind is reinforced. Medical science can account for such benefits, and the evidence for the permanent cure of organic disease through the exercise of religious faith alone is very slight indeed.

This is no reason, if we will consent to be humble, for failing to exercise the ministry of healing to the very great benefit of sufferers. I long for the day when this whole ministry will be removed from its present atmosphere of "miracle," when those who have the gift and the vocation will exercise their ministry without putting forward claims which excite controversy, and will be content, as many now are, to help others without seeking to bolster the Christian Faith by claims of miraculous cure. Such proof may some day be obtainable ; it is not now. Let us keep open minds about it, and not be driven by intemperate advocates of "miracle" to deny the real value of a sober ministry of healing.

If, however, a clergyman has not studied this particular matter and does not set out to cure the physical through the spiritual he should be careful not to treat, as solely moral or spiritual difficulties, those which may have a physical side as well. Many forms of moral and spiritual malaise may be due, at any rate in part, to purely physical causes. Depression, poverty of moral effort, spiritual devitalization of various kinds are often anchored in physical unfitness. The clergyman should have this possibility at the back of his mind. "Are you fit in body?" "When did you last consult a

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dentist?" "Go and get well overhauled." Such questions, such advice should be often given. I have known people whose moral infirmity disappeared as a result of the right medical treatment; a besetting sin may be an easily vincible fault which becomes apparently invincible because the sinner has a septic throat or a bad digestion. Even where cause and effect are not so closely joined it is unwise to expect to be able to give much moral and spiritual help to one who is suffering from any physical sickness which could be remedied and remains unremedied. And the minister of religion has his responsibility in the matter; he ought to lead people to cultivate healthy bodies, whether or not the connection is obvious, in the case of any particular person, between physical and moral well-being.

There is, of course, one department of medicine which the individual work of the clergy touches very closely—that of mental hygiene. So many neurotic states have their moral element; so many people come to the clergy because they are unhappy, disorganized, out of harmony, losing grip of themselves and of life for a reason which is mental or nervous as much as it is moral or spiritual. There are three mistakes which the clergy can make in dealing with people so suffering. One is to see psycho-pathological disturbances where they do not exist, or exist in such a very elementary stage that they would yield to a wise combination of religious treatment and common

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sense. It is no light thing to persuade people temporarily overwrought, or living a life which ultimately might bring them to the doctor's consulting-room, that they are already invalids and in need of expensive medical treatment.

A second mistake may be made through ignorance ; it would be to fail completely to recognize that a person was in need of medical advice. Many people in that condition are exhorted by ministers of religion to repent, say their prayers, come to Holy Communion, or make a regular Confession—when the chief exhortation they require is to consult the right doctor.

The third mistake springs from a combination of knowledge and over-confidence. The clergyman recognizes the symptoms, makes an incorrect or incomplete diagnosis from them, and proceeds to practise what is really amateur psycho-therapy. The result of some elementary knowledge of the new psychology has made me more and not less inclined to suppose that I am incompetent alone to deal with people who display what seem to me to be pathological symptoms. And, in spite of what has been said above about the inadvisability of sending people needlessly to a neurologist or psychiatrist, it is probably a less serious mistake than the last, and certainly than the second. In our generation we are gradually passing from curative medicine into the age of preventive medicine ; there is much that may be done to prevent people in a primary stage of nervous overstrain or

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mental unsettlement from ever reaching that deplorable condition in which medical alleviation must be very slow and difficult, perhaps impossible. The minister of religion is in an advantageous position for helping this preventive work by the right use of religion or by securing medical advice before that most stubborn and significant of symptoms appears—the complete unwillingness to consult any doctor at all. In course of time as our training and standard in spiritual therapeutics are raised, so too may be raised the line above which we seek co-operation with a doctor. Even now the line varies considerably with different clergy. It must suffice to note here the dangers of precipitate action on the one hand, or of failure to act on the other. In any particular instance the decision must be left to the experience, discretion and inspiration of the individual minister.

At this point it is with some reluctance that I refrain from detailing the “symptoms” which, in my own experience, are sufficient to make me transfer responsibility to a doctor, or share it with him. But there is good reason against stating them. Written down in black and white they might appear to the reader rather silly, and might discredit rather than reinforce the case I have been trying to make out. Some of them would be open to the objection that they were insufficient, as taken entirely by themselves some of them indeed are. A person of sensitive imagination, reading this book, might detect one of the symptoms, as he supposed, in

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himself, and suffer from a consequent gloom into which I should be the last to desire to cast him. As all the illustrations would be taken from people whom I had known personally, my unwillingness to detail them may perhaps be excused.

At the same time we, the clergy, need to use our influence, whenever we have a reasonable opportunity, to break through the sinister hush-hush which envelops mental and nervous sickness. It is nothing in particular to be ashamed of; very few families could otherwise hold up their heads at all. Any reader can satisfy himself on this point, if he is in doubt; a careful examination of his family for three generations back on both sides—many need not go so far—will reveal some member who at some time or other was in a mental hospital—or should have been. This will prove, with exceptions, to be the general rule. Mental and nervous sickness are more distressing and pitiable than many other illnesses; their tragedy lies partly in the fact that they are often so easily preventible. But a false shame in the victim or his relatives is the blind foe of early treatment, and even when patients at last go to hospital they may still, even to-day, be unfortunate enough to inhabit a hospital where no serious attempt is made to cure or even improve them, but where they are just “kept.”

We should ourselves be foes to that attitude about anyone else which expresses itself in the words: “Oh, she’s all right really; its only nerves.” Again, if we have good reason to think

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that medical advice is required we have no justification for simply disengaging ourselves from the person about whom we have formed that opinion; we must do our best to secure for him the right medical advice. If we have some knowledge of the signs we shall be in a better position to judge the sort of doctor required; we shall, for instance, consider the advisability of recommending, in certain cases, the aid of a lady doctor. We shall not recommend anyone who has consulted us, as clergy, to any psychiatrist or neurologist about whom we know that he or she discounts spiritual values and beliefs, or prescribes that which is from a Christian standpoint immoral.

Having made our recommendation we shall offer both to doctor and patient our co-operation; the former is not always as disinclined as we might suppose to accept this. The latter is usually willing to continue receiving our help. For the reverse of the truth that in moral and spiritual difficulties there may be a pathological element is this—that in pathological states there is often a moral and spiritual element. We must take care not to dethrone the sense of moral responsibility by saying: "Only a doctor can put you right; you are wasting your time in coming to me; you are a sick man, not a sinner." The better line to take is such as this: "You've got all this business rather exaggerated, and I think you're overstrained; if you would take the advice of a good doctor you'd be giving your moral effort much more

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chance of succeeding." We have a part to play in helping people to see that it is their duty to employ *all* the means available for their final restoration to spiritual efficiency, and that the Spirit of God works powerfully through the medical profession.

B. *The Besetting Sin*

It is of considerable importance not to beset people with a particular sin. Quite enough are so beset already and the adviser may sometimes unconsciously make this mistake. He is called upon to pronounce upon matters of right and wrong and to help others make their own pronouncement; he must help them to discover their motives and to view a proposed course of action in all its bearings. He must suggest the practical and spiritual aids that seem most applicable to the particular circumstances. Thus in a sense those who come under his influence are affected by the way in which he looks at things himself. If they trust him (and he can hardly be of service to them if they do not trust him) they take a glimpse at their lives through his spectacles. To submit their problems to someone sufficiently detached to give the right perspective is often part of their object in asking advice at all.

It must, therefore, be a matter of some moment whether the glasses through which the adviser looks out upon the world and human life are of

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the right quality and set at the right angle. They are formed by his religion, his experience, and his own character. In part it is excellent that it should be so. While allowing for temperamental differences in others he is bound very often to set most store by the path to God which he has himself trod and to recommend courses of action which in his life or in the lives of others he has proved good by experience. But it is not desirable that his evaluation of good and evil, of virtues or vices in others should be too closely related to himself. He may have his pet virtues, and may not bring to the consideration of another's position that proportion and balance which are so necessary.

There is more than one origin of the pet virtue. There is, for instance, the virtue which comes and always has come quite naturally to me. I am, let us suppose, very sweet-tempered or just. To be otherwise is inconceivable to me. My susceptibilities are always offended when I encounter ill-temper or injustice ; I find it difficult to appreciate the temptation to these faults, and tend to be unduly severe on them. I over-emphasize them and thus spoil the symmetry of the Christian character as a whole, and, subtly, perhaps without meaning to do so, I convey this over-emphasis to others. Or perhaps these virtues do not come naturally to me ; I have achieved them at tremendous effort and cost to myself. Because I have so often sinned through unrestrained anger or injustice in the past and have bought my present freedom from them

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at a price, their exhibition in other people distresses me unduly. I harp upon them.

A man may be obsessed with the enormity of a particular sin and stress the importance of its opposite virtue for an entirely different reason. He is himself still the victim of barely restrained desire and his mind is choked with the memories of his past failures. He is of a sensitive conscience, and suppresses his own weakness from his conscious mind because the disharmony caused by the remembrance of it is quite intolerable. He consoles himself at last with, for instance, the phantasy that in his sexual life he is most correct, and that sexual offences of any kind are, above all else, abhorrent to him. The underlying shame and hatred of evil is not allowed to find conscious play in his own life ; but it will not be denied, and it bursts out in vehement condemnation of sexual sin in others. He sees it where it does not exist ; he is always on the look-out for it. It occupies his mind. It is a preoccupation which is thoroughly unhealthy and, unfortunately, contagious. Other people learn from him to concentrate attention on one department of life alone, and to increase their own difficulties thereby.

Sex is not the only, though perhaps the best illustration of the lack of balance which may impair a man's vision of other men and spoil his efforts to help them. The remedy against disproportionate development in our moral evaluation of life for others is, of course, to get more or less right our-

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selves. Then by constant reference to the character and teaching of Christ we may keep and increase that sense of moral symmetry which He alone can give. For it is of vital importance that we should present perfection of moral character as He presented it, and emphasize the things which He emphasized. Often the clergy do not do this. I have lately been reading some of the hundreds of manuals with which religious societies flood religious bookstalls—very often with the intention of presenting the teaching of the Church from some one particular angle or other. In one of these the theft of a large sum of money is bracketed with going to Communion after breaking the fast—as mortal sins. Such a moral misvaluation is so far from the teaching of Jesus as to make one wonder what in heaven or upon earth it has to do with His Church. In another manual most emphatic stress is put upon the need for true contrition as a condition of God's forgiveness; this invites agreement. But when such penitence is stated as the *only* condition of forgiveness, one is left gasping. For it might be said that the only condition upon which Jesus Himself laid emphatic stress was that a man should first grant full forgiveness to those who had injured him before he was qualified to expect forgiveness of his heavenly Father.

Thus it is possible, in one way or another, to distort the symmetry of the Christian character; any such distortion by the clergy may result in those for whom they are responsible assuming

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moral burdens which God never meant them to carry, or acquiring a false sensitiveness of conscience about certain things to the exclusion of any sensitiveness of conscience about others. The Holy City, described in the book of Revelation, may be taken as a picture of the symmetry and perfect proportion of the character which is most nearly Christlike. "Having the glory of God. . . . And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates and at the gates twelve angels. . . . On the east three gates ; on the north three gates ; on the south three gates ; and on the west three gates. . . . And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth. . . . The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." Foursquare, not lopsided—"reaching the full measure of development which belongs to the fulness of Christ—instead of remaining immature, blown from our course and swayed . . . by the adroitness of men who are dexterous in devising error ; we are to hold by the truth, and by our love to grow up wholly unto Him."¹

The besetting sin, as it is normally understood, has nothing to do with any lopsidedness in the mind of a particular clergyman. Yet the latter was no mere side-issue and a discussion of it has occurred at what seemed a suitable place. It has, too, a special relevance to the help which clergy give to others, in that the remedy already described for oneself is the best remedy that can be suggested

¹ *The New Testament*. A new translation. James Moffat. Eph. iv. 13-15.

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to others. The man who is really beset in his mind must be led to relax his concentration upon the particular thing in favour of other qualities of character. The first step towards this relaxation is the manner in which the besetting sin is handled by the adviser. By his enquiries and suggestions it will become plain to the enquirer that the adviser is not primarily concerned with the besetting sin. To those who hear Confessions it should be an almost invariable rule not to start with the besetting sin. Even if the answer to the question, "About what do you chiefly want help or advice?" is "Well, of course, so-and-so (*i.e.*, what has appeared most prominently in the Confession) troubles me most," the correct method of treatment would probably be to make some such reply as this: "Yes, I can see you need help about that. But is there anything else?" Equally, of course, it is important that the adviser should not work up to the besetting sin as, in any way, a climax.

It is said that a fleet, as a fleet, cannot sail at a greater speed than that of its slowest ship. If the pace of the slowest is increased the fleet as a whole can move forward more rapidly. In personal character the slowest ship is often not that department which contains "the besetting sin"; in concentrating effort upon that, the person needing help is concentrating on the wrong ship, and is trying to secure progress beyond a point which some other department of character renders possible. "You talk about yourself as if, apart from this one

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thing, you would be perfectly all right. Is that really so? Look at the portrait of Christ, and find out what else you lack. Perhaps you are failing so continuously at this one point because you are un-Christlike in some other department of your life. What seems so serious to you is serious enough, no doubt, but Jesus calls you to follow Him not only in this matter but in all else."

Such advice is often followed by relaxation of strain; attention is directed for a time elsewhere; the slowest ship, now discovered, is quickened and the besetting sin disappears. To use another metaphor, this form of attack is like the capture of a salient; the commander does not attack the bulge of the salient but the neck; if he wins there the whole salient is automatically taken and the bulge disappears. In the moral sphere what is known as "the law of reversed effort" plays its part. As soon as the mind becomes obsessed by a particular difficulty efforts to defeat it serve to strengthen the suggestion, provoked by the memory of continual failure, that it is too hard to defeat. Remove the tension, reinforce faith by a victory in some less arduous field, and the spell is broken.

But that is not a full description of the victory. The assaults made upon the evil, the efforts to overcome it have not been without their effect. The citadel has been weakened before. It is wise sometimes to explain to someone struggling against a besetting sin the nature of the contest in which he is engaged. It is twofold. First, there is the

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evil itself; what it is itself, what is its fundamental cause can perhaps be discovered and explained. Next there is the chain of habit in the matter—the rhythm which has been established—and the knowledge that this is so. These two join in a vicious circle, but it is often well for practical purposes to deal with them separately: the evil thing itself, and the habit which has been built up on it. Once the habit is overcome, once the victim is relieved from the obsession of continual failure, all the past effort put into hatred of the evil itself takes effect.

For his encouragement and relief, as also for truth's sake, the individual must be helped to distinguish between temptation and sin. A woman of refined sensibility may feel soiled by thoughts or desires to which she has never yielded. Thus they are not connected consciously, or indeed actually, with any transgression of her own in the past. They may even not be in themselves wrong at all, except in so far as they represent the wrong expression of something in itself right; they may be due to the latent forces of human nature which might be expressed well or ill, or to the influence of environment acting upon her. The woman must not be allowed to burden her conscience with temptation which is successfully resisted, nor to feel a contamination which does not really exist. The same teaching may be given even to those whose temptation quite clearly emerges from past failure; any habit of sin, or any one conspicuous

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lapse from the standard of rectitude normally adopted by the individual must leave a mark on the mind and memory. At certain times the conscious mind may be assailed by the evil remembrance garbed as a pleasant experience, or strong temptations may occur to a man which would probably not inflict themselves upon him at all if he had not habitually sinned in the past. The man recognizes this and accuses himself of wishing to do that which he hates. He blames himself for being tempted. This experience is common enough and may be used as a warning to those who walk dangerously and play with the idea of sin as an interesting adventure. Many are those, who, for the reason given, bitterly regret the time when they seared the mind and memory with that which retains the power permanently to affect them. But the personal blame attaching to temptation, so caused, belongs to the past not to the present. The one-time drunkard gradually winning his fight against alcoholism does not sin again because suddenly he has a very strong craving to take too much to drink. To encourage the craving, to dally with it or to temporize, is the beginning of the old sin ; but the experience of the temptation is clearly no sin at all.

There are two modes of final escape from besetting sin, both of which can be corroborated by frequent experience. I have known people say truly : " As from a particular week or month, the temptation seemed to fall away from me," or

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"I suddenly realized at 2 p.m. on Thursday last that I was free." This escape—less sudden in fact than it may often appear—should always be mentioned as possible or even probable ; the expectation of complete, almost miraculous, victory must never die out of the mind of the real trier. Meanwhile he must be encouraged to notice that moral progress does not always consist of sudden victory or of an unbroken upward line. The line rises for a bit and then falls ; it starts rising again and keeps on the upward grade a bit longer and goes further ; then there is another fall. Each time the pilgrim picks himself up and starts again he must aim at keeping on longer, further and higher than he has been before, sure that one day the line will reach its highest point and keep there.

While the struggle towards this conclusion is proceeding it is necessary that the pilgrim should have some human companion. A preoccupation with any one moral struggle is unhappy enough, but if the sufferer is shut into himself with it his chances of ultimate success are reduced. The preoccupation then tends to become morbid, and all sense of proportion is lost. It is equally undesirable that he should lose reserve in a company of counsellors and be always talking about himself. Anyone who does this is liable to "enjoy moral ill-health" or to fancy himself "an interesting case." The latter is quite fatal. We should never let anyone suppose that his sin or even his temptation in any way makes him more interesting. If

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we have reason to judge that the circumstances of some man's temptations are really quite exceptional we should not let him guess our opinion, beyond showing that amount of sympathy needed to prove to him that we care about what happens to him and that we appreciate his difficulties. Sin is not interesting.

Once it is agreed that the trier should have some outlet it is for the adviser to discover from him who best can serve that purpose. For a time it may be the adviser himself, as it is often cruel to suggest a repetition of the effort to tell everything to yet another person. It may help, for instance, if, for a time, the trier reports each failure; the knowledge that in future he will fail—if at all—beyond the privacy of his own knowledge will be in itself a spur to him. If he gets pent-up with the whole business he must come and let off steam. The adviser will use his discretion in controlling the frequency with which this is done, so that it may not become a source of weakness. Often the circumstances suggest that some other confidant be found, especially for women. To find the right friend for the lonely woman is often the best thing that a clergyman can possibly do for her.

If the adviser transfers the enquirer to someone else, as just suggested, he must make it perfectly clear that this is not because he is "too busy" and that he is readily available if and when he is wanted. It is necessary also to explain that the first move on any future occasion will not be made on his

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own side, but must come from the person who needs help. "For I shall not think of this trouble of yours, if and when I meet you. You need never be afraid that I shall start talking about this business. You have given me your confidence, and it is important that you should not feel uncomfortable because you are never sure that I shall not reopen the subject. On the other hand my silence will not imply any lack of readiness to help, if you need any help that you think I can give. Only it is for you to make the move. Do you understand?"

This precaution is, of course, quite unnecessary if the person has just made a formal Confession. The seal of Confession entirely protects the penitent from any reopening of the subject on the part of the father-confessor. Personally, I could never unburden myself of my moral troubles to anyone of whom it was likely or even possible that, meeting me two months later, he would say: "How are you getting on about so-and-so?" or even that he should greet me with the question, "Well, how are you getting on, now?" accompanied by a meaning look and perhaps a squeeze of the arm. I am not the only person by any means who, regarding such treatment as quite intolerable, would remain closed like an oyster in the first instance unless secure in mind against the risk of that experience.

There are two other details of some importance which at first sight appear contradictory. It is

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necessary to distinguish, in one's own mind and in the mind of the person "beset," between true contrition, a religious state of heart and mind, and one of the other states which may be mistaken for it. A person may be worried by a besetting sin for one or more of many reasons ; it is a personal indignity, robbing him of self-confidence ; it is a mental nuisance, a preoccupation of which he desires to be rid ; it is a shameful thing, robbing him of self-respect, and leaving him with an abiding sensation of personal bedragsglement ; it is a habit which provokes constant fear of consequences, in this world or the next. Any of these may lead to religious penitence or may be a factor in its composition, but penitence before God is in the main quite different from any of them.

An idea of true penitence before God can be realized by recalling some of the well-known statements which have embodied it or at least given evidence of it. "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord"; "Take me away, and in the lowest deep there let me be"; "Father, I . . . am no more worthy to be called Thy son." The clergy, of course, do not need to be reminded that the Christian penitent bitterly regrets sin because it injures his fellow-men, God's other children, and because it breaks the family relationship with the loving Father ; the sinner is far from home ; he crucifies Christ afresh. There are many ways, simple or theological, in which penitence may be stated. It is more profound than loss of self-

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respect or of self-confidence, than personal humiliation or sense of bedrugglement ; it has in it much less of self-regard. This is a distinction which clergy need to bear in mind in dealing with those who are weighed down by the burden of the past and of the present. To help them be yet more sorry for their sin, so that they may see it as God sees it, is not to depress them still more or make them morbid, for it brings them to the harmony and peace, the restitution and restoration which forgiveness implies. The certainty of God's forgiveness not only removes their consciousness of disharmony with and estrangement from Him, but restores their self-respect, banishes shame and gives them hope.

Thus it is not really contradictory to urge that hopefulness is the best gift with which any adviser can infect those who come to him for help in temptation. If it is true that it is our business to secure sincere contrition for sin in the past, it is also our business to teach people that they are fundamentally good and not evil. If we believe in the Incarnation we must believe in and teach it in a practical way. If they learn nothing else from us those who use us must learn that they were built for better things, that out of that in them which has been turned to evil good may come ; that, as they are children of God, there are latent possibilities in themselves, of moral progress, of spiritual development and practical achievement hitherto unrealized and undreamed.

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This is so important that, at the risk of apparent repetition, more should be added here. Much may depend on the picture which a man has of himself ; however great a sinner, the true picture is of one who is potentially good and beautiful. As much may depend on the picture which the adviser forms in his mind of the man who comes to him. This is the great protection against disgust or shock at any acknowledgment of depravity. Jesus, the eye of love, would be searching, beyond and below the merely disgusting or degraded, for the lovable. It is no sort of use setting out to help people at all unless we are convinced that the lovable is always there. We have got to find it. Sometimes it is only another person's confident expectation of it that will draw it out and nurse it into life. The most callous and cruel murderers have been known to be amazingly tender and self-denying towards birds or animals. The law takes no note of this ; the psychologist may even link together in his theories murder of man and love of animals ; the shepherd of souls fastens on the latter. To him the man is first and foremost one who loves his dog ; only in the second place is he one who has knocked his wife's brains out for the sake of her insurance money.

Such an attitude towards the sinner does not involve us in any condonation of murder ; it does not mean that the ministers of Christ have no duty of severity towards sinners. It does mean that love sees good first and not evil. It means that

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the only starting-point for good is goodness, and that the good qualities in any person are the seed out of which a Christlike character may yet develop. The adviser may be bound to try and secure true penitence ; to advise against temptation, to warn and rebuke. But that in which he must be chiefly interested throughout is the reflection of the Christ-character which can be found in all who come to him.

So many people remain half-hearted in their endeavours after goodness because no one believes in them or expects them to be any better ; or those who do so believe in them do not know them as they really are, and this ignorance robs confidence in them of, at least, part of its value. That someone who knows the worst side of them should show by his treatment of them, sometimes by his words to them, that he expects great things of them because, under God, great things are possible may be often a sheet-anchor to those who would otherwise be swept away in the stream of life's temptations.

Real humility on the part of the adviser constitutes an important part of his necessary equipment. He will suppose that he himself has something to learn from all who come to him ; not simply a something that will increase his experience of men but a something that will add to his own knowledge of God. Constantly is many a clergyman humbled by the discovery of moral effort which puts his own to shame. The effort may not have been successful, but it has often been made

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under circumstances of much greater difficulty than he, the adviser, has ever had to meet. He is bound to hold up before men that standard of conduct which he believes to be that of Christ Himself; he may not water it down or in the long run claim anything less. But he knows all the time that not by any absolute standard will his friends in Christ be judged, but by the motive of their actions—unenlightened very often but the best motive they have ever known—and by the moral effort which they have expended on trying, even unsuccessfully, to do what was right “according to their lights.” There are two kinds of people, contact with whose lives makes me most healthily dissatisfied with my own. One is the saint. I thank God that I know some saints. The other is the person of whom it might be said—utterly depraved, soulless, no good; but the description is not quite true. I have seen in some, so described, a capacity for goodness, and for goodness through effort and sacrifice which puts to shame any achievements of my own. This is to speak relatively; and it is, so I believe, relatively that we are judged of God our Father.

CHAPTER VII

CREATIVENESS

It has been stated in these pages that spiritual therapeutics should be concerned with health, development, and spiritual growth as much as with healing or restoration; that we must start with love and God, not with sin and evil. And yet much of the discussion has been concentrated upon "difficulties," temptation, sin. This is inevitable from the nature of the case. Normally, the clergy are not consulted by those who are "all right"; personal dealings with individuals inevitably mean, in at any rate a majority of instances, moral problems, spiritual dilemmas provoked by human weakness or by the corruption which we call sin.

However, a more positive line has often been indicated and was more definitely stressed at the close of the last chapter. On this line we must now proceed further. Our working theory, proved correct in so many different instances as to be of almost general application, is that sins are the perversion or abuse of that which in itself is of God. Thus sin is a corruption, a strain of evil in that which is and was meant to be good. I have a tendency which, for all practical purposes, I may

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call an instinct of "self-regard." Without it I should be almost an automaton, lacking in that which is the climax of creation—personality. But with it, unchecked and undirected, I may be unscrupulously ambitious, cruelly selfish, conceited, pleasure-seeking, wasteful. If I wish to avoid being any of the latter, a merely negative attitude towards the sin of them is quite useless. I have to find a way of occupying my energies which expresses what God gave me as good in good directions and not in bad.

In advising others the clergy will always bear this in mind. Resistance to evil, struggle against temptation—these are desperately uninspiring occupations. To exhort people to them, to present the Christian character in terms of self-suppression or self-mastery alone is to present only half the truth. Without articulating the desire, most people desire or need something to live for. The ideal of Christ-likeness, or of communion and union with God supply for some a sufficient aim. For many these are too abstract; lacking the experience which would give these ideals a warm reality they need something more immediate and concrete. In nothing is the difference between adviser and advised more marked than in this. Generally the clergyman knows that communion with God which is in itself a desirable and precious experience; to many clergy it is a reality which in itself constitutes a sufficient purpose for their lives. Many who consult them have no such vivid experience, and

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some are almost incapable of it or capable of it only in small degree. It is most unwise to forget this, and to hold out to all alike an ideal which may not fit their immediate individual need.

Indeed, there are many people much worried by the fact that they cannot speak about their religious experience because they have never *felt* it, as others speak about it because they have known it. The conventional language of religious experience is not language which they can use or understand. They are often desperately conscious of lacking what they have been led to suppose is an essential part of the Christian life. These need to be told that all do not share the same experience; some see a vision of God which never comes to another; some can use with the deepest conviction language which it is not necessary for others to attempt to employ. They must be warned that that which they most desire may well be missed altogether in the search for it. Christendom abounds in legends and tales akin to that of St Christopher; we meet Christ not by searching for Him, but by serving others. Some derive from this a consciousness of His presence with them; to others it remains the mere performance of self-denying and difficult, often of unpleasant, things. These need to learn that there is too large an element of self-seeking in the service of others when performed in order to secure a certain feeling inside oneself; that this element must fade away, for the Christian life does not consist in the search after anything for oneself.

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Because there are so many people who are troubled that they have not experienced the knowledge or emotion said to figure in the Christian life, it is undesirable to add to their number by presenting abstract ideals to the concretely-minded. The practical man, the extrovert as he is sometimes called, will not always fare well if he falls into the hands of the mystic ; and the mystic will not obtain very much help from an adviser of an extremely practical and concrete cast of mind. It is well for the clergyman, however sympathetic he tries to be, to recognize that he has his limitations and to recommend the enquirer, in certain instances, to someone more likely to be able to understand what is wanted. The above are two instances of the need for this recommendation.

The main point to be achieved for all is a positive aim or focus of attention which will occupy their energies and deliver them from a preoccupation with themselves and their temptations. The adviser must not be satisfied, as we have seen, to assist the defeat of an evil, negatively, or to point to an abstract ideal as the chief or only positive. He must help the individual, if he can, to find an aim which will absorb, or a method of proceeding which will have, for the time, the same result. Primarily he will attempt to provide this through that element in the man's nature through which he has chiefly sinned hitherto ; for the fault, the vice, the sin, there is generally some positive opposite which must be the aim. The misuse must be

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transformed into a use. And he will be wise to use the social impulse in the sinner and to present the positive in terms of the welfare of others.

Common sense will often devise the right alternative ; modern psychology suggests many means. To reproduce a list of them here would be simply to repeat information obtainable elsewhere. The young man or woman's faults or besetting sins may perhaps arise, in a particular instance, from lack of opportunity for proper expression of natural endowment. Limelight is sought and acquired because proper means of expression are denied. The intellectual life is starved ; or craving for beauty remains unsatisfied ; a person of keen though undeveloped powers of organization is in the position of under-dog, leading an automatic existence, at home or work, or both. A woman of talent and enterprise has nothing but flippant employment in a life of gaiety. Such factors in environment may play a large part in the development of " sin." Often enough the bad environment is part of the social structure of life, as it obtains to-day, which the adviser cannot alter. But within the limitations set by the particular circumstances he must do his best to help those who come to him find the positive which is possible for them.

The self-centred spiritual invalid, whose devotions are ego-centric, will be taught how to use the prayer-life as a means of escape from herself into the life of the world. The man who " cannot forgive " will be helped to see how he might

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benefit the person against whom he harbours resentment, even before he has forgiven. The woman who, without knowing it, is introverted, discontented, restless and irritable, because she has been denied motherhood, will learn to find objects for her care and devotion. The cleverness which has degenerated into cunning will be trained back into a better channel and pitted against evil or difficulty which needs to be outwitted. The quarrelsomeness of uncurbed pugnacity will find a cause which calls for unflinching perseverance. The mourner will be called not simply to patience and resignation but to an acceptance of personal bereavement which shall transmute it into an active sympathy in the sorrow of the world; for those who have really suffered and have made of their suffering an instrument of God's purpose can best console others and lead them along the same path.

In all his attempts thus to help people develop what God has given them to the best possible use the adviser will lead them, however gently, to rid themselves of subterfuges and self-deceptions and to face their lives as they really are. Throughout, the quality which he most needs is love, love with the mind and not only with the heart. We, as clergy, are bound constantly to be faced with mental situations in the lives of others, which could not possibly occur in our own because we are differently constituted. It is no use handing out the advice to others which would best suit ourselves. The following comparison will illustrate

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the difference between love which, though full of pity and warmth, is unintelligent, and the love which thinks because it cares.

“What you want is a thorough rest. I’ve been through the same experience myself and I found this book so helpful. Please take it; I know it will do you good. And do get away to Bloomer; the air there is so wonderful and I do admire the Vicar; his sermons would help you, I’m sure. If you’ve any financial difficulty in going there for a fortnight, do let me help.” Love and generosity like that warm and comfort one momentarily; they are very precious; they are often a reflection, though only partial, of the Divine Compassion in human life. He or she, however, whose love kindles the imagination might think quite differently and entertain the following thoughts: “On paper her recent experiences appear much the same as mine some years ago, but she is an utterly different person from myself. I needed rest and it did me good; she needs, I should think, change of occupation or more occupation. I wonder what she had better read; I’d like to lend her this, but it’s too elementary for her. Send her to Bloomer? No, those lodgings which I know would be the worst environment for her, and, in her present condition of mind, the Vicar would bore her.”

The puzzle for anyone who would advise a friend rightly is how to achieve the right thought, how to say the right thing. There are three aids to this; one, of course, is experience of life and

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people which only comes with years and some of which, at least, cannot be communicated or learned by any other means; another is the use of the intelligence. One has to answer not only the question: "How should I feel in her circumstances, if I were in her place?" but also "*How should I feel in those circumstances if I were the kind of person she is?*" Imagination and intelligence combined with experience of life are not the only requisites. The spiritual sympathy, that sensitiveness to the requirements of others which come through prayer on their behalf, is the third essential. If one has prayed and prayed right about the people one is called to help, prayed about them one by one, prayed for the spirit of understanding and adaptability in unexpected meetings, then one is likely to be spiritually sensitive to the needs of others.

Apart from these three, of which the last two, and particularly the last, are far more important than the first, there is no infallibility. It is difficult to understand the claim advanced by some who advise chiefly through Confession that there they are, at least, protected from ever giving wrong advice and from saying the wrong thing. There is no semi-magical or automatic protection from error. A priest could hardly carry on his work at all unless he believed that he could stir up the grace of God within him, and that the Holy Spirit would give to him the words that he should speak. But this happy event depends neither on his office nor on

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the fact of the Confessional but on the spiritual level of his own life. If he has a right to expect that he is to be protected from positive error, then he may entertain that expectation whatever the particular framework within which his personal ministry is exercised.

It will be noticed that what has been called the "positive" advice to be given is nearly always a lead to the constructive or creative. It may need some ingenuity to demonstrate this in every instance, but generally it is true that our faculties and powers must be disciplined and trained for their employment in constructive channels. Fundamentally we are all "makers"; the positive opposite to waste or misuse is creation. The urge to produce, to leave our mark in something created or achieved, to make some impression on life is an urge that, in greater or less degree, is common to us all. In company with others I have lately tried to work out some of the implications of this idea in one of the "Affirmations"¹ in the series of that name promoted by the Bishop of Liverpool. To that publication I must refer those who wish to follow up this idea further and care to think out what may be the Christian background to what are commonly spoken of as "problems of sex."

However, the purpose of this present book would be incompletely served if nothing more were said than has already been said in connection

¹ *The Place of Sex in Life*. 1s. Published by Ernest Benn.

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with the sex-impulse, the satisfactory management of which is a trouble to so many. For there is in religious language no positive opposite to sexual vice. The words "purity" and "chastity" are the best that we can produce, but it is doubtful whether an effort to reinvest them with positive meaning would be successful. For so long they have meant no more than "freedom from impurity and unchastity" so that they merely represent another method of stating a negative idea. Press anyone who proclaims sexual purity as an ideal for a definition of what he means by "purity" and too often he will produce nothing better than "not being impure." Yet in this department of life more than most, positive teaching and ideals are required.

The state of mind of the adviser is here of first importance. What is his own view of sex-impulse? The general atmosphere of organized Christianity in which we have been brought up has clouded the minds of many ministers of religion with the idea that sex is "not quite nice." It is a source of temptation and of problems; it is a matter for self-mastery in chief; it is all very difficult. The publication to which I have just referred attempts to combat that very prevalent notion and to insist that the true and healthy view of sex is that it is of God and therefore good, though contaminated, like all else, by what we call sin, and that that is the only sound starting-point for any Christian consideration of it. Here, I do no more than

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repeat my conviction, and associate the statement with the previous declaration that our powers are God-given and that sin is the corruption which may lead to their misuse. Thus in this as in all else we begin with God and good and not with sin and evil. It is necessary for anyone who wants to help others in the difficulties of this matter to achieve that positive attitude himself; it follows inevitably that he will advise best whose own sex-life is harmoniously ordered and directed. In nothing else is man—or woman—so likely to colour his advice to others with reactions from his own disorder.

It would not be possible within the compass of a book such as this even to outline the method and detail of the handling of this whole subject by the clergy in personal ministry to individuals. Education of young people at different ages, in what exactly that education should or should not consist, the best positive means of redirecting the interest and energy which would otherwise be occupied in sex-abuse, Preventive and Rescue work—these are just some of the departments of the subject. There are many publications which deal with some of these, and many, though not all, of them are excellent for the purpose.¹ Any pamphlet,

¹ The White Cross League is the chief Church of England Society for dealing with this matter. The Secretary of that body or of the Archbishops' Board for Preventive and Rescue Work, Morton's Tower, Lambeth Palace, S.E.1, would recommend their own or other literature on request.

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tract, or book which started out with the idea that sex was unclean would be banned by the writer of this present volume ; so would any publication which made of fear a leading motive.

This last point demands a moment's digression. Fear is not a Christian motive in chief ; the " fear of God " to which we are all called is not dread of His avenging power and supposed avenging inclination. Fear is at the root of many disorders of mind. In part it is a necessary instinct and serves a necessary purpose ; but, exaggerated, it is as great an enemy to love as is hate, and only perfect love can cast it out. Because an element of fearfulness is in the composition which God has given to us, the fear-motive has its part to play in moral questions. But it is, I believe, a minor part and anything like fear of consequences to oneself stands condemned as a governing motive of conduct.

There is one subdivision of sex which is chosen for further consideration here. The subject is Marriage, and one reason for this choice is that the available literature on the subject includes no adequate book ; that will still remain to be written by someone or some group and the line required most may be gathered from what follows here. The other reason is that I hold the opinion that education for marriage is the most important hinge of sex-education in general. If we have considered the subject educationally we are naturally inclined to say : " Start with the child," or even " Start

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with the infant. The beginnings of sex-education have a very definite relationship to the other purpose for which the organs of reproduction are used." This is probably true, but anyone who has had to tackle the educational problem knows that in considering the children he is at once driven back on the question: "What about the home? What attitude do the parents take up? What is their influence?" The vicious circle must be broken somewhere and I believe that education for marriage is the point at which to break through.

For clergy have a definite opportunity with their flock at the time of marriage; so long as the Church, in marrying, is responsible for performing a civil contract, which it performs neither in Baptism nor Confirmation, the clergy are still brought into personal contact with a very large section of the adult population at a critical and impressionable time of their lives. Education in sex has an obvious justification and relevance for those contemplating marriage. It is also free from one of the difficulties which accompany other sex-education, namely, the great variety in sex-development and in the strength of desire in one individual compared to another. Immaturity and precocity, slow or quick development, differences in environment or physiological inheritance may make group-instruction difficult or undesirable; and even individual enlightenment is not free from such problems of treatment.

But whatever the temperament or the stage of

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mental development of a man or woman, marriage involves experiences which are common to nearly all who enter it. A definite point has been reached. In suggesting that sex-education hinges on proper preparation for marriage I am not advocating the omission of proper instruction at other times and for other ages; that needs to be developed. I only wish to emphasize what seems to me the most important, partly because the most neglected sphere. For it is deplorable to consider how on this subject right-minded people put their emphasis usually on a negative—the prevention of extended facilities for divorce. They would deny this, pleading that they were really engaged on a positive, namely, the defence of the sanctity of Christian Marriage.

This plea, however, will scarcely survive examination; for the phrase, “sanctity of marriage” has no positive content, except “purity” which has no detailed positive significance. It is always easier to protest and denounce than to think; popular modern attacks upon the institution of marriage provoke combativeness, whereas it is not combativeness for the marriage-tie but intelligent instruction before marriage which is most likely to slow down the pace of divorce. If the Church had put into the preparation of its members for married life half the money, energy and interest which it has put into “fighting divorce,” there would be fewer divorced persons in England to-day, and fewer undivorced people enduring the misery

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of a bond which is merely legal and no longer loving.

Preparation for Confirmation is rightly considered of first importance, and, even if it is performed badly this is not generally—where it occurs—through lack of goodwill or through failure to estimate the importance of the occasion. Marriage is called by many one of the lesser Sacraments of the Church, and bracketed as such with Confirmation. When a man and woman stand together in the chancel on the day of their wedding they are facing a future of wonderful opportunity and of great difficulty; they are about to take vows of tremendous import. What is done in those few minutes is of inconceivable significance racially, nationally, morally and spiritually. Yet in a majority of instances the ministers of the Church have taken no steps to secure that the man and woman are in any way prepared; for it would hardly be urged that a short address at the conclusion of the Service (still less a long address) formed an adequate preparation for married life. Worst of all, in coming to Church to be married, people are deliberately, or unthinkingly, asking God's blessing upon their enterprise, and yet, generally speaking, the clergy take no steps to secure that the union shall be of the kind which God is likely to bless.

Then having not merely allowed but tacitly encouraged ignorant, thoughtless and uninstructed marriages, the Church rouses itself from its torpor

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in order to see to it that people, having once committed themselves, shall be kept, at all costs, bound. All this is strong language, but it is well weighed. As a clergyman I have had my share of trying to guide those who are finding married life very difficult or are seeking to escape from it; again and again I find circumstances in which a little care beforehand would have had one of two effects: either the man and woman would never have been married to each other at all, or they would have entered their contract with just that amount of understanding which, particularly in the first months of married life, would have been a practical guarantee against separation later on. And sometimes ministers of religion may offend by commission and not only omission. I have known more than one miserable married woman who had been encouraged to enter loveless marriage by the priest who, on being consulted, recommended the marriage and the motherhood which would follow it, as a "vocation." Such an attitude is, of course, peculiarly abhorrent in any priest who finds his own particular vocation in celibacy. And men and children too may suffer as acutely as women as a result of the unhelpfulness of the Church.

Assuming, for the moment, that ministers of religion have the necessary knowledge, how and when should an opportunity be taken or made? The parish priest is often one of the first to know when a particular couple has become engaged, because he is a friend of one or both of the families.

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Under circumstances of that kind it should not be difficult before the wedding, as long before as possible, to take an opportunity of discussing, at least with the man, the whole subject. However, it perhaps more frequently occurs that the incumbent knows the man and woman slightly or not at all, and encounters them when they make enquiries about banns. I will immediately forestall the obvious objection: "But, my dear fellow, its all very well for you; you are not doing parish work. You don't know what it's like to cope with the incessant demands on my vicarage front-door bell. Are you going to suggest that I can interview strangers about the intimacies of married life, when there is a queue in the hall waiting for papers to be signed about pensions, or to arrange funerals?" There are two answers. The first is this: "Not at the time perhaps. But whether or not you will take advantage, some time or other, of that meeting over banns depends solely on your view of its relative importance. If you have a bumper year for Confirmation candidates, you don't make other work a reason for scamping your preparation of them; you make them, and quite rightly, a reason, if necessary, for denying certain other claims on your time. If you really agree that preparation for marriage is essential you will put it very high in the claims upon your time, and other claims will have to be denied." This is the argument which has been already used for the importance of personal work as a whole.

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This answer opens the door to the second part ; the particulars of the banns having been taken the clergyman will ask for an appointment. It will not always be easy and methods of securing that opportunity will immensely vary. But in a surprising number of instances when the first shock has passed the man will prove relieved and glad to have a talk ; he will be as glad that arrangements should be made for the girl to whom he is engaged to meet some married woman recommended for the same purpose. Sometimes the adviser will himself interview the fiancée, sometimes in addition he will see both together. There is no one form or formula ; so much will depend upon the circumstances. Failures, when they occur, to secure any opportunity, will not be in a large proportion of the whole, and even if they are many the rebuffs will be a small price to pay for the successes. Once the custom is established the difficulties will lessen ; wanted, pioneers. It may be urged that I underestimate the difficulties and the number of failures likely at first to result from this venture. Perhaps I do. But I cannot discover any other alternative. We cannot legally refuse the Sacrament of Marriage to Church members against whose union there is no bar. We must either make some effort to give proper instruction about marriage or rest content to see Christian influence on marriage and sex in general continue to dwindle away. A new custom of the type suggested is, of course, difficult to introduce and will take many years to establish.

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The question is simply : Is it not about time that we started ?

Up to this point the big assumption has been made that ordinarily the minister of religion is equipped for his duties in this matter. He is not so equipped. But in previous chapters recommendations have been made which, if carried out, will help to make good the deficiency. The right woman can perhaps be secured to talk to the girl ; she should be (with rare exceptions) herself a married woman, for then she speaks with experience and, if she has had children herself she can, later, use the friendship made to help the young mother in the right grounding of her own family when it comes. The connection that could be established between preparation for marriage and Maternity and Infant Welfare work on a Christian basis represents a great opportunity.

In no matter more than this is co-operation with the medical profession so practically advantageous. From his own family doctor or some other the clergyman can obtain for the men some of the necessary physiological information, and in some instances a suitable book to lend. It may be said that in certain strata of society the younger generation discuss sex so freely together that they know everything ; they probably know much more than their grandparents at the same age, but, even when they have committed frequent premarital fornication, they do not know all that they need—man about woman, and woman about man ; what they

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do know has sometimes been acquired in anything but the best setting and with a wrong emphasis.

In addition to information there is much practical advice that can usefully be given. It will never be wisely attempted by the young unmarried priest, for this would simply be to bring the value of the advice given into ridicule. He must find someone else to do what is wanted and should use any opportunities that come his way of urging the advisability of such consultation. The older unmarried priest will likewise refer intending bridegrooms elsewhere or will take pains to equip himself by consulting married men. Married clergy will not too readily suppose that the mere fact of marriage in itself makes them entirely competent to inform and advise.

On to information and practical advice must be added positive Christian teaching. In this we are up against the deep-seated influence of the Marriage Service in the Book of Common Prayer (unrevised). Conventional "purity" teaching leaves the impression that self-control is of value only for the unmarried, and that marriage is a licence for indulgence of the physical appetites, particularly for those who have kept themselves "pure" hitherto. The words of the service, as read over millions of couples in the past, seem to state this definitely: "Secondly it (matrimony) was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry." From the word "obey" in the

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woman's marriage vow it has been supposed by many a man, and woman too, that the former obtained, with God's approval and the Church's sanction, certain rights over his wife's body. This sort of misunderstanding is, in the long run, at least as vital to the future of Christianity as the exact position of a "black rubric."

It may be argued that the relation of the sexes is immemorial, that it is a "natural" condition, that savages get along very well without instruction, and that people had much better be left to themselves. My answer would be that modern civilization is highly artificial, that modern life is oversexed, and that the story of sex-mismanagement in married life is considerable and also in parts preventable. I do not attempt to give further detail of the sort of help that might be given, for it would overload this one subject in this volume as a whole. I can only hope that a more competent person, or group, will soon give to us the book on this subject that we need. Yet it would seem like avoidance of a difficulty to make no reference to one burning topic which calls aloud for careful and definite handling—that of conception-control. But I propose to deal with it—and briefly enough—solely under the heading of personal ministrations to individuals; for that is the subject of this book as a whole. As Christians we must be concerned with other aspects, but it is the personal problem alone which will here be considered. First, certain statements of ascertained fact will be put down,

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and upon some of these comments will be made—often inconclusive and deliberately so. An obvious omission in what follows is that there is no discussion of the grounds upon which the practice may be judged to be, in general, wrong. Unless the discussion here were drastically limited it would soon double the length of this book.

1. The Lambeth Conference Report¹ records the resolution on this subject with these opening words: "The Conference, while declining to lay down rules which will meet the needs of every abnormal case, regards with grave concern the spread in modern society of theories and practices hostile to the family. We utter an emphatic warning against the use of unnatural means for the avoidance of conception." Some form or other of conception-control is so widespread that the warning is needed. It is the reiteration of what, until recently, has been the united and agelong conscience of the whole of Christendom upon the subject. As clergy we are justified in considering exceptions only because of the admission that there are "abnormal cases." This, for instance, justifies us in supposing that the Anglican Bishops in 1920 agreed that it was within the competence of the Church of England to consider exceptions and not to be bound by mediæval ecclesiastical law on this subject. Those readers who believe that we cannot act alone in this matter, that we must postpone any

¹ S.P.C.K., 1920, p. 44.

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reconsideration of such a vital moral and practical problem until the Church of Christ is reunited and until that section of it which we know as the Church of Rome acts with us, will have no use for what follows ; in the same way I regard their point of view as frankly impossible. If I really believed that the Church to which I belonged was not free to consider and act upon grave moral issues I could not remain in it.

2. Conception-control is to be distinguished from abortion, the deliberate prevention of birth after conception has taken place ; both practices may be wrong—the latter is universally condemned—but they are totally different matters. We are now considering the former alone.

3. The medical profession, as a whole, is divided in its judgment as to whether certain forms of contraceptive are physically or psychologically injurious or not. Until there is a clear majority of responsible medical opinion on one side or the other, it is dishonest to quote and be influenced by one side alone. It is to be noted that even if the final decision is, medically, against the use of contraceptives, we may still be left with a choice of evils, if it could be shown that, in a particular case, the failure to use them was also injurious. This is not to be taken as an argument in favour of the use of contraceptives ; I am only concerned to point out that if we would be honest and not lopsided in our view of this subject we cannot

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quote "evil results," even if generally agreed, as a conclusive argument either on one side or on the other.

For the Christian in life must often be faced with a choice between two courses of action, neither of which is in itself absolutely right. When this occurs, his intention and motive, the principle on which he acts, his dependence upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit may result in a decision which for him is right. In a complex existence the individual must be allowed to retain the hope that, faced with a choice of "two evils" there is such a thing as a "right for him under the circumstances," to which God will lead him; and that by discovering what this is and acting upon it he will be getting as near as possible to "absolute right" even though his detailed action is only "relatively better" than some other course of action.

4. In this matter of conception-control there is no certain appeal to the teaching of Christ or the New Testament. In the Old Testament the oft-quoted incident of Onan cannot bear all that it has been made to carry, nor is the Old Testament the standard of Christian morality. We are left to apply Christian principle to the individual problem. The Christian principle is Love; love of God and neighbour at whatever cost; the realization of membership in the family of mankind; to put oneself always second, and the other person first.

5. Onanism in any form seems to obtain practic-

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ally universal condemnation from the medical profession. In so far as it is practised in order to secure exactly the same end as "artificial contraceptives" it is hard to see in what way it can be morally preferable, especially in view of medical opinion. Indeed, in so far as those who practise it "think contraceptives wrong" the use of it suggests a moral confusion which is really serious. This sort of distinction confuses the moral issue, and brings Christian morality into disrepute.

6. There is the method known as "the safe period." It is not always safe. Where it is found to be safe it often seems "unnatural" in that it coincides with woman's disinclination and not with her desire.¹ In other words the safe period is, for many people, just the time when nature seems to suggest that physical union should not take place. Doctors do not agree whether this need be so. The fact remains that in a large number of instances it is so. When it is so the Christian husband may, at least, be excused for deciding, with his wife's agreement and out of consideration for her, that it is more "natural" and morally preferable to use contraceptives at some other time than to employ the safe period without them. Where the safe period is not so marked by strong disinclination

¹ I do not wish to make too much of this. But it is worth mentioning because some of those who oppose other and artificial contraceptives altogether do so on the grounds that they are "unnatural."

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on the woman's part, the question still remains whether or not it is more moral to use a "safe period" than a "safe method," when the intention, in the use of either, is identical. Not many doctors would be found, on medical grounds, to object to the use of the safe period. The decision must rest with the individual couple themselves. The minister of religion, if consulted, will do his best to present facts or considerations, which might otherwise be overlooked, as material for the formation of a decision, but the decision itself he will leave to the people themselves.

7. The facts about what are known as "contraceptives" in the lives of Church people or of Christians generally seem to be as follows: First, as has been already stated, the conscience of the Church has been, until lately, set against them altogether. Yet many people already use them without any sense of guilt at all. It would never occur to them to mention the fact in making a Confession or to have the practice on their conscience in any way. Many others object on moral or æsthetic grounds. Æsthetic distaste in this matter may be of ethical significance; or it may be due to the convention of environment. We need to beware of either of the following arguments: "Æsthetic repugnance? Nonsense. My wife and I don't feel it. Why should anyone else?" or "Æsthetically it is repugnant to me. There must be something morally unsound with every one

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who feels otherwise." Again, a large number of Christian married people are in great doubt and uncertainty, and have no clear idea how they should regard contraceptives or what they ought to do.

8. "The abnormal case" may be due to economic causes; another child at all, or within two years, cannot possibly be provided for—or, at least, so it is said. Love of parents decides that this at least would be wicked and cruel to existing children and to any fresh child and that it cannot be according to the will of a loving God as they understand it. Even then the situation is not "abnormal" if by due control and moral effort, without damage, contraceptives can be avoided. Or there are medical reasons against another child; he would be physically unfit even if he lived, or his birth would kill the mother.

9. The obvious Christian remedy for this situation is self-control. It is important to distinguish between this and total abstinence. Self-control should figure in all married relationships as in the Christian life as a whole. Total abstinence may mean not self-control alone, but self-suppression which is not the same thing. The "abnormal case" is that in which total abstinence produces a strain which threatens to mar the peace and happiness of the rest of married life. It does not follow that in all instances total abstinence produces this result; many married couples refrain with a moral

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effort which is wholly admirable and is of real spiritual advantage to them both, but there is no doubt whatever that for some others a policy of complete abstention is disastrous. These sufferers argue that physical intercourse is part of the sacrament of marriage; that it is a means not only of expressing but of developing the love that one has for the other. In some of these cases the strain of denial is such that its atmosphere affects the rest of the home, and the children suffer by it. Man or woman suffer such emotional disorganization that they drift apart, and one or the other may reach nervous breakdown or other serious illness.

10. The strain of abstention on the unmarried is not parallel. It is the close association of married life in a home, often with unavoidable physical proximity at night which constitutes the strain. Normally no such circumstances apply to the unmarried—or at least to those of them who wish to do what is right. For the girl or boy of to-day, who is not yet married and has no very steady moral principles, the danger lies rather in publicity about conception-control and particularly in the open sale and advertisement of contraceptives in crowded thoroughfares. This traffic should be suppressed by the organized public opinion of right-minded people. For rather older unmarried men and women it would not be fair that too much stress should be laid upon the exceptional circumstances of the married. For the strain of continence

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upon the unmarried may be very great indeed, and there is no doubt that the use of contraceptives by the married does encourage the practice of trial or companionable "arrangements" between the unmarried. Yet I do believe that there is a real difference in strain as between the married and the unmarried and that the arguments of the latter can be met.

Thus we pass definitely from statement of fact, coupled with some expression of opinion, to the writer's opinion, in which will appear occasionally some reference to facts.

11. The religious adviser, faced with what appears to be "the abnormal case" will always help the enquirers to test their own sincerity and thoroughness in consideration. What for instance is the value of the economic "can't"? Does it mean that the parents can't afford to send another son to Eton, or that they prefer a car to a child, or that all the conventions (in dress and other matters) which obtain in the class of society to which they belong must be followed? What extremity of personal sacrifice are they prepared to make? Have they ever considered moral effort and self-denial in this connection?

12. The adviser will also help enquirers to use a self-control that shall be intelligent. There are common-sense recommendations to be made which often have never occurred to husband and wife at all, and yet would make possible at any rate the

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proper spacing of a family. But some of the common-sense is of little service to the working-woman in an overcrowded home who spends the night in a narrow bed with her husband who is not perhaps always perfectly sober when he retires for the night.

13. For many, a reasonable self-control is rendered difficult through the absence of any of that preparation for marriage which has been urged earlier in this chapter. Young couples find themselves in the grip of an impossible situation, governed, so it would seem, by habit and rhythm, a situation which they had never contemplated. They do not know, for instance, that the use of artificial contraceptives may lead to sterility, that it is desperately foolish and wrong to marry with the intention of preventing the birth of any children at all by the use of contraceptive measures ; that it is at least unwise and unjustifiable, except by "self-control" and generally not even then, to attempt to postpone the birth of the first child. People who do not intend to accept the first purpose, both in biology and religion, for which marriage is intended should not enter marriage or should postpone it. They do not stop to think that the only child may miss much in the companionship of brothers and sisters denied to him, and in the education which membership of a large family supplies for life. They may be just as thoughtless in these ways as those held up as improvident because they have a large family

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insufficiently spaced for the health of the mother. Again they do not consider what may be the effect upon themselves of a course of action which is highly artificial, nor what mental and emotional effect upon the race may result from conception-control if practised universally. For this last consideration must be their concern ; they must be quite certain of their own justification before they adopt a course which they would not wish to encourage as a general practice.

14. The adviser will emphasize the necessity of trust in God, for it is this which is so often lacking ; first of trust in His power to enable people to exercise the required control and to govern and direct their mutual love in some other creative endeavour, if another child must not be allowed ; thousands of couples could testify to the reality of this power ; secondly of trust in Him, that if they use and do not abuse the creative gift and apply the power of self-control with which He has endowed them He will not give them more children than they can provide for ; again thousands of couples face their liabilities thus trustfully and have no cause for regret. Perhaps the worst thing about raging propaganda for conception-control is that it is used by so many as a short-cut nationally and individually. There are a very large number of people who, in effect, take the line : " Stop the people breeding ; that's the only way to stop overcrowding, unemployment and any increase in

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my own rates and income-tax." The individual vice of contraceptives is to remove artificially all adventure and risk, all uncertainty, all trust in God from a large department of life.

15. But the "abnormal case," to quote the Lambeth Conference, still remains, and it is no sort of use putting blinkers on and refusing to face the evidence for it. I do not propose to attempt any more detailed definition, for each case is by itself, and it would be almost impossible to word a definition that could defy misunderstanding. I propose to conclude this outline by mentioning the conditions which the adviser will always have in mind :—

(a) The man himself (even if he be a clergyman) and the woman are seldom the best people for determining that their own situation is so abnormal as morally to justify the use of contraceptives. They need to check up their opinion against the judgment of someone whom they can trust, in order that over-emphasis may be moderated and no relevant consideration may be belittled or ignored. The final decision must not be the adviser's, but the decision of the man and woman concerned.

(b) And the decision must be mutual. The conscience of neither man nor woman must be violated ; the strong æsthetic repugnance of neither must be overpersuaded. Husband and wife will in this, as in all other fundamental matters, act together

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and proceed in any direction by mutual agreement. Married life is and must be co-operative. The adviser will bear this in mind from the outset, and will even refuse—save in most exceptional cases—to discuss the matter with husband or wife separately unless he is assured that the conversation with one of them will be repeated to the other and discussed between both of them.

(c) In view of physiological considerations a doctor's advice should be taken before any contraceptive is employed. The doctor should be one who believes in the spiritual and its vital relationship to the physical.

(d) Contraceptives will never be employed by the Christian as a substitute for self-control, but only, by use on occasions, to mitigate the harmful effects of total abstinence. The prevalent notion in some quarters that you may remove nature's checks upon intercourse—pregnancy and childbirth—and then indulge physical appetite at will is unnatural in a high degree; it is the high road to the ruin of married love and happiness. On the other hand, those who use contraceptives very sparingly may well resent the common suspicion that they have bidden farewell to self-control.

So much of space has been given to an outline of this particular problem, because it is so pressing upon clergy to-day, in their own lives and in the lives of those whom they have to advise, that to

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ignore it in a book bearing the title of this book would have been sheer evasion. But it is necessary to end the chapter by reminding the reader that sex in life must not be regarded primarily as a vehicle of problems but as a gift of God ; that man is a creative being, and that self-mastery about anything is not an end in itself but a means to a higher end ; that the adviser, viewing human life against this background of God's purpose for man will always endeavour to supply or suggest positive and constructive remedies for temptation and sin. An outline of the contraceptive problem as it concerns individuals may be useful in a wide application ; it illustrates the sort of way in which I hold the clergy should approach any problems of conscience where there is no " absolute " right on which they can authoritatively and fairly insist as universally and without exception binding.

CHAPTER VIII

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LIFE in terms, not of disservice but of service ; of creativeness not of negation. This is the aim which clergy must inspire. They will stress rather less the danger of sin than the responsibility of opportunity. We are all endowed with a creative faculty ; God calls us to share in His work of evolution. We must not divert His power, given to us, into unproductive or harmful channels, because that is waste. Thus the adviser will be as ready to stimulate sensitiveness of conscience about failure to find and use opportunities as about definite acts of sin committed. To do things which one ought not to do means to omit to do something else which one ought to do. An act of disservice to mankind is not solely an act of injury but it implies a failure to perform some other act, an act of service.

The most positive ideal, though difficult, as has been shown for many people, is union with the Divine Spirit. It is intelligible enough that many in the heyday of life should find it hard, if not impossible, to find in this a sufficiently tangible objective. They find rather the motive which

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harmonizes their personality and provides a focus for their energies in the ideal of duty to man; human life and its problems of one kind or another challenge them to produce their best and not to waste themselves. When this is so the idea of God, and His communion with the individual soul may be legitimately used, not as the end in itself, but as the means towards the end which they see. It may truly be objected that this is only a stage, but it is a stage in which a majority of people, who are trying at all, are to be found. They desperately need help to apply the resources of religion to their practical aims in life. Yet much of the literature of past ages and to-day which deals with pastoral and ascetic theology seems to take as the starting-point a type of person who is already on the devotional ladder, or who can be led at once towards mystical union with God. There is not enough material to help us in dealing with the more ordinary and less "naturally religious" temperament.

Someone lately has used some such phrase about the Church as "a devotional society for the pious"; and this is a compliment in so far as it implies that the inner circle of the faithful find in the teaching and ministrations of the clergy real aids to a closer communion with God. But in this chapter I am concerned rather with the large number of people to whom those aids do not appeal, because they do not really understand them; the Church so often does not meet them on their own level of mind or

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temperament, but seems to be talking to them in the language of a higher stage than that to which they can at present aspire. They are often made to feel that it is their fault, that it is some lack in themselves which renders them incapable of swimming in the devotional tide.

A. The Use of the Bible

A fair example of this difficulty is in the use of the Bible, as it seems to be conventionally recommended. There are two main lines of convention, neither of which are of any real use to the kind of person now being considered. One is the custom that so much of the Bible should be read each day. There may often be a card available with the daily divisions indicated. Those who use such a card have the assistance which comes from the knowledge that many others are using it too. Such a system is, no doubt, admirable for one kind of person. His reverence for the Bible is such that the mere reading of a certain number of verses secures for him an inner feeling of strength and satisfaction. Or he considers it to be a Christian's duty to read the Bible daily, and, often at considerable self-denial to himself, he performs this duty punctiliously. The effect, in many instances, must surely be to steep the mind in the things of God and daily life is governed accordingly.

For many other people, differently constituted, such a method is impossible. Their intelligence

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must be more actively called into play; they cannot honestly derive any satisfaction by reading a certain number of verses each day as a duty, and if they start using their minds about what they read they become involved in real difficulties, the unaided contemplation of which certainly does not draw them nearer God. The formality of the whole proceeding irritates them, because often it seems to bear no relationship to their life as it has to be lived that day. A modified form of daily Bible reading, designed to meet some of these objections, is being tried out in a Bible Reading Fellowship.¹

The other "convention" consists in what is known as Meditation, but to this, as commonly understood or misunderstood, there are certain objections. There is, for instance, a prejudice against it in some quarters on the ground that it is "High Church" or "Anglo-Catholic." This misunderstanding deserves no more dignified description than rubbish. It is true that the technique of what is known as "Meditation" is part of the heritage of the Church, and as such is perhaps most valued to-day by those who emphasize Catholicity. But for the devoutly minded it implies the deepest reverence for and devotion to Holy Scripture, and a reliance upon it as the voice

¹ Further particulars of this can be obtained from the Secretary, The Rev. C. Dru Drury, 1 Church Road, Brixton, S.W. The scheme provides brief daily commentaries and does not ignore modern difficulties of Biblical criticism.

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through which God shall speak. Such ideas are, surely, sufficiently evangelical. But the prejudice just mentioned calls for a digression into other cleavages of much the same kind.

“Retreat” is another method of approach to God which suffers from the same element of partisanship. It is simply an attempt to secure for the human soul the conditions of quiet and solitude so constantly sought by our Lord during His earthly life. That is all. To go into Retreat is as Christlike a method as prayer itself. If Retreats are often conducted along lines which appeal rather to Anglo-Catholics than Evangelicals, that is only because those who have mostly attended them in the past belong to the former category. If there are different and better lines—lines more agreeable temperamentally to Evangelicals—let them be developed. And if the word itself is an offence, let it be called “Retirement” or by any other title. Our unfortunate divisions have indeed reached a deplorable pitch if the example in this matter of our Lord and St Paul is to be disregarded and even suspected by one section in the Church because it is favoured by another.

The same lament may be raised over the exclusive evangelical use of the “Prayer-Meeting” as a form of corporate devotions. Certainly the facile garrulity which sometimes marks these occasions may put off any but those who have been religiously bred in the environment of prayer-meetings, but there is no fundamental reason why the underlying

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idea of the evangelical prayer-meeting should not be helpful to devout Anglo-Catholics ; the latter, however, seldom if ever employ it or even give it a fair trial because it seems to have a " Protestant " character. There are exceptions ; within recent years this method was employed at a central annual service of the Church of England Men's Society in church. The gathering contained representatives of diverse schools of thought ; different members of it, as moved by the Spirit, in turn voiced aloud the aspirations of their hearts and minds in prayer to God. Some who had never experienced this particular method before and were prejudiced against it found it not only unexpectedly dignified but thrilling with sincerity and devotional reality. Toc H in some of its celebrations has happily blended a large number of praying voices in a liturgical form.

The last example of the reaction of one section of the Church from another is that of the notice or disregard of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On one side the Mother of Jesus is hardly ever mentioned ; on the other side our Lady is so dominant in the religious observance of some Churches that the casual visitor may genuinely wonder whether this is the religion of Mary or the religion of Jesus. The neglect at one end seems to react on those at the other end so that they seek to restore the balance by over-emphasis ; this over-emphasis so scares or revolts the Protestant that he seeks to remedy it by disregard. Here is a vicious circle of

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cause and effect, resulting in exaggeration on the one side and loss on the other.

While talking about Retreats a devout evangelical said to me not long ago : “ You know, we evangelicals *can't* keep silent ; we don't like it.” If that were true it would represent a bad state of affairs, but of course it is not true. Indeed the exact opposite is noticeable in the latest evangelical missionary movement of which I have heard. It is marked, otherwise, by the long established evangelical tradition ; it expects sudden “ conversion ” and favours the prayer-meeting form of devotions. But its adherents are expected to spend some time each day in silence, cultivating quiet, relaxing muscles and giving up body, mind and spirit to the inflow of the Divine Presence and Power. Mystic, Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical or nothing, whatever we may call ourselves, we all have that in us which—if only at certain times and in certain moods—can say, “ Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth,” and is ready to seek the answer in silence. The advice as to relaxation, in order to secure the desired end, does not vary so very much ; the means used belong to psychology as much as to religion, and naturally each separate kind of religious person discovers much the same method in the end, though details may vary. Let us continue to learn from one another and not despise or suspect all each other's devotional practices.

Thus to make oneself susceptible to the presence and voice of God is the chief object of what is

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called Meditation ; but the atmosphere which it creates is too rarefied for the more ordinary mortal, to whom religious exercises of any kind do not come easily. Indeed, when many who practise it use the word Meditation, they really mean Contemplation ; they seek to escape from consciousness of themselves into realization of the Divine ; they neither want nor need a practical application to emerge ; they seek to learn more of God Himself and to deepen a sense of union or communion with Him. It is because most of the booklets on the subject either make this their aim or contain a large element of this that they seem to suggest something too vague or complicated for the ordinary and unpractised person.

In attempting to describe what meditation for him might be I have in mind the more elementary aim of helping him, through a use of the Bible which may be called devotional, to be the kind of person he wants to be, and to do the sort of thing in life he feels he ought to do. It has been suggested to him, let us suppose, that this use of the Bible twice a week or even only once a week (or daily), might be a valuable item in a simple rule of life which he proposes to adopt, partly as a means of self-discipline, partly as a means of deriving from God the guidance and help he feels he needs. The "meditation" will supply him with a kind of motto or governing idea for the day or the week—something against the background of which to live his daily life. A useful preliminary would be to

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form a list of suitable passages or verses in advance ; in this selection the only guiding principle is that he should, himself, feel that the selection is likely to be helpful, and that he should not include in the list any passage which suggests obvious intellectual difficulties. This provision will ensure that he is not held up any day through uncertainty as to what to do next.

The detail which accompanies this description requires, as far as I can see, no apology. My contention is that too many people are told to pray or meditate who do not know how and that detailed help is required. Thus one method out of many is here suggested. The bodily position will be entirely in accordance with the inclination of the individual ; walking in a garden, sitting or lying on a sofa, kneeling before a crucifix—let each do as he will. If one is not in the open-air the conclusion of the meditation should be performed kneeling, and throughout it is a help to rest the eye upon a Christian symbol or picture or text. I now put the description in direct speech, in which, of course, much modification would be needed for different individuals.

Take a verse, or a phrase, or a whole incident as suits you best. For instance, in St Luke, chapter ix, some would take the whole of the double scene described in verses 28 to 42 inclusive, and consider the contrast between the hill-top and the plain below. Someone else, or the same person at another time, would take the first half of the scene

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alone, the Transfiguration. Someone else would find a few words from verse 28 quite sufficient material: "He . . . went up into a mountain to pray." You should always limit the time which you spend, not allowing yourself more than half an hour. This rule will force you really to achieve something and will prevent the meditation passing into a vague day-dream or a doze. Often much less time is all that can be found or usefully spent by some people. And once the method has been learned, do not despise the use of only five minutes just to start the idea which you can develop on the bus-top on your way to work, and return to at times when your mind would otherwise be vacant or wandering; then you can bring the idea to a point in your prayers at night. Take as an example the concrete story (in St Matthew, chapter xiii, verses 45 and 46) of the pearl-merchant who found one pearl of great price and sold all that he had in order to buy it.

First, picture the scene as vividly as possible; use your imagination freely; even modernize it into terms of Hatton Garden if that helps you. Try and answer the question: "What does this mean?" Consider this more than you have ever stopped to consider it before. He found a pearl of great price. How did he know it was so good? Imagine his previous experience in the business, as a result of which he had acquired the capacity to distinguish the first-rate from the second-rate. Picture his hesitation; the risks involved; his valuation of

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what he already possessed. Then the decision is made. There follow the arrangements to get the best price possible for his own sale of jewels, the anxieties which accompanied it, followed by the fear of being outbidden at the sale of the pearl of great price. Finally the joy of possession. The stages of the meditation may overlap and run into one another, but if you find it simpler to distinguish them as separate steps, call this first step Apprehension, or Appreciation.

The next step is Association, building a bridge from the scene pictured to yourself and your own life. The question to be answered is: "What has this to do with me?" "Have I the spiritual discernment to know the first-rate, in character and life, when I see it? If not, why not? If I do know the things of God well enough to recognize them when I see them, do I really want them, or do I prefer the second-rate? Or to what cost and sacrifice am I prepared to go in order to be first-rate myself? Is that aim a pearl for which I am prepared to pay a great price? Have I a really Christian scale of values? What is the first-rate worth to me? On what is the eye of my own ambition fixed?"

The third step may be called Application and the question which belongs to it is: "What am I going to do about it?" The answer may be an act of penitence for the past, an act of thanksgiving for greater understanding and for a new vision of life's possibilities; or it may be an act of resolution

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offered to God. Such resolutions should be short-range resolutions and not, usually, decisions to reform the whole of life. Something, arising quite naturally from the answer to one or other of the questions in stage two, will be chosen to do in the immediate future: "I won't hurry my prayers to-night." "I won't be late at the office, as I usually am." "That bit of work to be done to-morrow, Tuesday—it always comes round on Tuesdays—shall be really done properly for the first time, and, I hope, not the last."

Obviously there are ever so many different lines along which different people might follow out a meditation upon this parable. What has been sketched does not claim to represent exactly what our Lord may have meant the parable to convey. But one of the remarkable features of His parables is that the particular purpose for which He used them (when that is clear) never exhausts their meaning. This may be illustrated by a briefer outline of a meditation on St Matthew, chapter vi, verses 28 and 29: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

This is part of an argument against over-anxiety about clothes and food, but a meditation might be usefully made that had no reference to the context. Thus:—

1. "I know the words so well and yet I never have considered the lilies before. On this one

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saying alone, if He had never said anything else that was beautiful, Christ can be hailed as artist—the expression in human life of beauty, as well as of goodness and truth. I suppose He was probably teaching by the wayside and stopped to illustrate his point, as the disciples gathered round Him to look at the flowers. ‘Look at those lilies there; have you ever really thought about them before?’ What does the idea of them convey to me now? The profusion of nature, millions of most perfect flowers and plants blooming year by year, never seen by the eye of man, decorating inaccessible or unvisited places. Beauty is the hem of His garment, to be touched in the effortless perfection of the lily.”

2. “Am I sufficiently appreciative of beauty? Am I on the look-out for it, even in city life? Do I remember that beauty in life is an approach to God in myself and others? Where in my daily life does beauty pass me by and leave me unnoticing?”

3. An act of penitence for any waste or degradation of beauty, for failure to be drawn nearer to God by it. An act of thanksgiving for beauty, especially for the apparently effortless beauty of the naturally fine character I meet sometimes in men and women. A prayer for the secret of growth in beauty.

This second outline has been given partly because the subject of it is less concrete than the first and will illustrate the greater difficulty of meditating

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upon abstract ideas. But its achievement is largely a matter of practice. There are two or three points which the clergy might bear in mind in explaining to their people this form of devotional use of the Bible. It will be recommended particularly as a remedy for difficulty in concentration upon prayer. It has often been said that out of fifteen minutes available for prayer, five should be used in preparation, and if only five minutes in all are possible, two or three of them should be used in preparation. Part of the difficulty some people find in praying is due to the fact that they rush at it without clearing the mind of other distractions and gaining the necessary concentration. Another person depends upon a praying mood, which comes and goes ; at times no subject of prayer seems to hold attention or to interest. For all such conditions the use of the Bible is a very good remedy. It focuses attention ; it drives out other preoccupations ; it secures the required " mood " ; it suggests some subject for starting prayer and prayerfulness, to which it is the doorway or porch.

I have very little belief in the value of an address to a group, embodying instruction on how thus to use the Bible, as compared to a led meditation. That is to say, the explanation should be in part itself an illustration of the method recommended, with two or three pauses of two minutes or more to enable the listeners themselves at the time to adopt the course recommended and follow up the line of thought suggested or some other.

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B. *The Sermon*

It is also worth while considering the possibility of occasionally varying the Sunday morning or evening sermon with an excursion into this method. The sermon, educationally, is becoming out of date ; yet theologically or spiritually or morally it is by way of being educational. But in no other sphere that occurs to my mind is a twenty minutes' talk, unaccompanied by discussion or question and answer, practised as a means of education. In many subjects the hour's lecture which still obtains at the University is not really educational ; it may or may not assist the passing of examinations, but educationally it is a relic which will, as a general practice, hardly survive another half-century. The Workers' Educational Association has for many years received help and encouragement from both Oxford and Cambridge to try out a better use of the lecture idea. It is becoming every year more common to associate discussion with the popular single lecture, as organized by various bodies. Yet there is nothing to ensure that the sermon shall be a means of drawing out and developing the spiritual faculties of those who listen to it. There is no time for thought. If the preacher stops talking for more than a few moments it is supposed that he has forgotten what to say or is feeling unwell. A listener may hear an idea likely to be helpful to him, but the sermon is immediately succeeded by hymn

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or some other activity generally irrelevant to the sermon-subject ; as he leaves the church he meets friends ; when he reaches home he is in a crowd. The mood is dissipated ; the impression fades.

A remedy for this would be to allow time for quiet reflection in the actual course of the sermon. Always to use the sermon-opportunity in this way would be, no doubt, impossible or inadvisable, but what follows might be tried out on frequent occasions. A brief preliminary explanation is needed ; the congregation are asked to co-operate by preaching the sermon to themselves, and to think out their own conclusions along the lines suggested or on others of their own. They are requested to keep as still, physically, as possible, during the periods of silence even if they are not co-operating. The following outline of the actual procedure may be given from a recent experiment at an ordinary Sunday evening service at Southwark Cathedral. The text is from St Matthew vii, 24 and 26.

A wise man built his house upon a rock.

A foolish man built his house upon the sand.

“ Our object is to discover whether we are more like the wise or the foolish man, and then to plan how to be more wise and less foolish. So we first ask ourselves these questions : What are the foundations of my work in life and of my love in life ? Find the answer first in the good foundations

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—we all have them—what Jesus Himself would approve as good motives, good aims.”

(Then will follow the first pause, the length of which will depend upon circumstances. One minute and a half at least should be the aim ; three minutes may even be achieved. The preacher meanwhile will sit down in the pulpit, or retire to the back of it, or stand where he is with head bent. The congregation should have been asked beforehand to take no notice of him, but to fix their eyes on the east end or something else helpful during the times of silence.)

“ Some of us have found in our lives foundations for which we can thank God. Now let us ask ourselves the questions : What part of our life is built upon sand ? or what sand is to be found in the foundations of all our life ? Are there any mean motives ? Are there any aims which are just unchristian ? The standard we take by which to answer these questions is not a comparison of ourselves with our neighbour, nor the world’s standard—but that of Jesus Himself.”

The second pause need certainly not be longer than the first, because the beginnings of the answers to the second series of questions will have appeared in the mind while the first were being considered. But the interval should, on each occasion, be timed properly. Two minutes’ pause in a sermon, just because it is so unusual, will appear to the preacher much longer than it really is, and, unless he uses a watch, he will be liable to end the silence too

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soon. It need hardly be added that it is very important that the preacher's own mind should be free from any sense of awkwardness and that he should conduct the whole experiment quite confidently and naturally.

“Some of us have found things to put right ; we have, perhaps, faced them more honestly and have realized them more truly than for a long time past. We are sorry for them. We want to build the house of our life on good foundations and not on bad. Let us now begin to plan how this might be done ; we cannot finish the plan to-night, but God may lead us to think of some one definite thing we can decide to do. Will you join with me in your hearts while I say a prayer, asking for God's help in this, while you remain sitting just as you are.”

Some prayer such as the collect for the fifth Sunday after Easter, will introduce the last period of silence. This might well be concluded by the voice of the preacher reading, without any introduction or further comment, the whole of the short parable, verses 24 to 27. This sample is offered as by no means a perfect model ; I am merely in the experimental stage myself, and the method is obviously patient of considerable variety in treatment. Yet it does seem one route by which we may sometimes break away from the un-educational form of the ordinary sermon, and help our people to think for themselves. It is hard to see why this form should be employed at the

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Three Hours Devotions on Good Friday and at no other public Service.

C. Prayer for Oneself

How different individuals may be helped in the life of prayer is in itself a subject for a book or library, but a few points may be stressed here. As the person beset must strive to attain a positive virtue, rather than concentrate upon resistance to an evil, his prayers should be trained in the same direction. To dwell overlong in prayer upon temptation is to increase one's own sense of its invincibility. Many temptations are better avoided than faced ; not all temptation is allowed in order that our mettle may be tried. People often need to be helped to discover the stages by which the impulse to sin acquires momentum, and then to be directed how they may avoid the issue altogether by quitting the field before the pitched battle is ever fought. This avoidance of " occasions " for sin, and the adviser's study of its method are important. So in his prayers the person beset will concentrate upon positive means of avoidance of temptation, and will escape from his preoccupation into the realization of God's power and love. Acts of faith, affirmations of the most positive kind repeated, if possible, aloud, should be used. Prayer against a particular sin should be largely reserved for the silent utterance of the heart and mind at the time of actual, and perhaps, sudden

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stress of temptation. In a moment the eye of the soul may be turned upward, as the personality seeks sanctuary.

In nothing is an avoidance of the issue so advisable as in prayers about difficult decisions. To pray about them is often merely to re-argue the issue and all its pros and cons on one's knees. So absorbing is the issue in its difficulty that many people find it impossible to pray honestly and effectively about it. Often these should be advised not to attempt to pray about it at all, but to use their praying-time in getting to know Jesus Christ better. Some form of meditation such as has been already described fits this purpose almost better than anything else. Passages of the Bible which seem to have a bearing upon the conflict of choice will be avoided, and others taken for study. The advice given will be something like this :—" The significance, to yourself, of your life and what you do with it has become too engrossing. Just think of Christ, and get to know Him better. Then, when this sense of strain and difficulty passes from your mind, the decision to which He is calling you will appear. The knowledge may come to you in some apparently trivial way. But you will be in no doubt about it."

Yet it must be recognized that the very intimate, even passionate, language used by some books of devotion about the Saviour is to some men and women a hindrance rather than a help. There is a pursuit afoot; the "Hound of Heaven" is after them.

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If it is true that Christian discipleship means complete surrender to the Divine Will, this idea of surrender is repugnant to them. This may be, in man or woman, a form of pride which must give way. But it may be of use to point out that "surrender" does not mean the capture and subjugation of the personality nor any loss of individuality—that it is the surrender made by Love to Love and that the result will be power to the personality and a fuller life. This may remove the difficulty for some, but it only increases it for others. Some women pass through phases in which to think of Jesus Christ intimately is to involve themselves in other difficulties; for the language of some devotional books is exotic and erotic. Women so affected are not necessarily "abnormal," though, of course, they are probably a small minority. It may be of some help to them, if they have never realized it before, to be led to understand that God is not masculine; that the Incarnation means the representation in the life of the world of the Divine Love equally in men and women.

But the difficulty may still remain in sex-starved lives. There are certainly two remedies for it. A living doctrine of the Holy Spirit is often realized with the greatest sense of relief and happiness, and needs to be developed and taught much more than is the custom. A second remedy is to be found in the thought of the child Jesus and His mother. So much is made of this idea at Christmas time, but, surely, we are at liberty to think at other times,

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with profit, of the childhood of the Saviour, of the appeal which God makes through weakness rather than through strength. The association of the Mother of Jesus with Him is helpful and perfectly legitimate ; it need not detract in the least from the divinity of the Son, by which the Incarnation places One only above and beyond all others, men or women. Not to John alone, but to all who need her in time of strain and difficulty, does Jesus say : “ Behold, thy mother.”

D. *Self-Examination*

Reference made to books of devotion suggests the difficulty of finding a manual of preparation for Confirmation or for Holy Communion which is really helpful and sufficiently positive in its scheme of self-examination. First we need an alternative to the ten commandments as the standard of conduct. No fewer than seven of them start with the words : “ Thou shalt not.” It is true that they may be treated positively by the form in which are cast the questions suggested on them for self-examination, but the standard of conduct suggested by them is less than fully Christian. The Beatitudes or the fruit of the Spirit in the fifth chapter of the Galatians are more profitable ; again, Dr Moffat’s translation of 1 Corinthians, chapter xiii, is illuminating. But there are two respects in which the conventional form of self-examination needs alteration.

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Self-examination should be a consideration of the whole self and not only of sin. For instance, it might sometimes start from good things instead of sins committed, and result in thanksgivings and not in confession alone. Penitence for sin is still well assured, as anyone will agree who has tried this method. I write down my assets in deed or character, and then I ask myself, of each in turn, the question—Why? The answers will not always be creditable, and those assets which do not seem fundamentally sound will be enclosed in brackets. The list which is left makes a subject for immediate thanksgiving, and the morbidly inclined will acquire, perhaps for the first time, a sense of genuine shame for continual failure to realize God's goodness to them and the evidence of His power in their lives.

Next I compare my reduced list of assets with any list of Christian characteristics, such as those already mentioned. The Christian list is longer or more comprehensive than mine, and those items which do not figure on my own list now form the subject of further enquiry. In a manual of preparation the questions suggested under any one heading might run as follows:—

Jesus said: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness."

Do I? If in part I do, how can I further develop and satisfy this desire? If not, on what else are my affections set? Can those objects of my affection be made part of the righteousness which

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should be my aim? Would God hallow them? Can I honestly bring Him into them without fear and without shame? If not, why not? What is wrong about them? Why should I be ashamed of them?

This illustrates the other respect in which the framework of self-examination needs revision. The questions suggested should lead to causes, and not merely to the tabulation of sinful acts. To illustrate this further we may take the old established standard of the ten commandments, and rearrange the form of self-questioning suggested by the words, "Thou shalt not steal." Let us suppose that there is no matter for confession under the head of pilfering or stealing, and that attention is focused on the second part of the analysis of this commandment given in the Church Catechism's "Duty to my neighbour"—To keep my tongue from evil-speaking and lying.

Am I always truthful?

In intention and not only by word of mouth?

If not, what has made me wish to deceive?

Have I deceived myself first or deliberately sinned?

Does my sin spring from any of the following—pride, jealousy or fear?

There are many people whom the clergy have to help individually in self-examination; those whose examination is perfunctory, formal or unimaginative; those who are preparing for a first Confession or otherwise are preparing for a fresh start and

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wish to overhaul their spiritual engine. It matters less what form of questions or manual is put into their hands than that the right approach should be secured. It is possible sometimes to help by writing down a few sub-headings for the form of self-examination already in use, to make some additions, and possibly to delete some questions altogether. For example, no form is sufficient which does not somewhere, or more than once, bring the self-examiner face to face with the fundamental question of omission: "In what have I failed to see, or have seen and disregarded opportunities?"

We have had occasion more than once to notice the work and influence of booklets and manuals. Many are so admirable if slightly amended here and there; some are so misleading as to cause serious alarm that religious instruction is increasingly given in this particular way. The bookstall at the west end of the Church is an admirable idea, but it is impossible to believe that the incumbent has always carefully read all the pamphlets which are there displayed.

E. Prayer for Others

There is another subject to be here included on which individuals need guidance very much. The appeal of the clergy for intercession as a part of the prayer-life is more insistent than ever, and a great many whose consciences are touched by the appeal simply do not know how to set about doing

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what they are urged. A few suggestions will now be made, but it is important to note that, as with meditation, group instruction will lose much of its effectiveness unless an opportunity is given, *at the time*, to put into practice the methods advocated.

One of the hardest subjects of intercession is a "cause." Many good people find it very hard to love humanity in the mass or to pray properly for anything as big as the League of Nations, the Boy Scout Movement, the British Legion, or a Missionary Society. Their difficulty does them no discredit; as intelligence (*i.e.*, understanding, not brains) plays an important part in the formation of moral judgments and in the activity of "conscience," so we should pray not only from the heart, but with the understanding also. The first requisite is some knowledge of the cause. It must indeed be difficult if not impossible to pray for missions overseas if one knows nothing about them. The perusal of the current number of the *International Review of Missions*, or *Christianity and the Race Problem*, or *The Moslem World in Revolution*, or *The Clash of Colour*, will soon remedy the first deficiency.

Living interest is thus aroused; prayer for the extension of Christ's kingdom ceases to be regarded as a formal duty and begins to become a felt obligation. But part of the difficulty still remains if the individual has never been overseas, and knows no one intimately who is engaged in missionary work. The cause must somehow or other be personalized. There are a great variety of ways in

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which this may be done, of which one example is now added. In *The Call from Africa*¹ I read on page seventy-one: "Nine languages out of ten have less than twenty-five books in all (*i.e.*, of Christian literature)—any full set of which could be read through in from two hours to two days! In seventeen languages only do more than twenty-five books exist. To-day millions of young Africans eager to learn are crowding round the village teachers asking for 'more' only to be met with the reply: 'No, this is all we've got.'"

This description fires my imagination; I picture the British and Foreign Bible Society by nearly every mail refusing the urgent appeals of missionaries for a translation of even a portion of the Sermon on the Mount or of a brief outline of the Church's faith, for circulation in the villages. I can personalize that need in the general secretary of that society or its treasurer, and can pray for them in their arduous task at the home base. I may be even led to subscribe to that or some similar society. For we must remember that in helping our people to do the work of intercession properly we must remind them of the need to serve the cause for which they pray. Money, often enough (though not so often as might be supposed) they cannot give, nor is that the point; the point is: "In my own life and character, or by my action, I must test and justify the sincerity of my

¹ Press and Publication Board of the Church Assembly, 1926.

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prayer. Pray I must and will. Is there anything else I can do ? ”

Or another picture is called up ; I see the missionary, sweltering in Central Africa, unable to use his catechists to the full for the evangelization of the surrounding districts which he cannot touch himself—simply because there does not exist the literature which they may leave behind in the villages as they make their rounds. So he laboriously sets to work in the spare time of his lonely life, often late at night, over months and years translating parts of a gospel, so that it may be printed. There *must* be people like that, and I know that the Almighty will deliver my prayer to the right address. Knowledge and interest have suddenly made of prayer for a cause, the missionary cause, a living reality.

The question may still remain for some—how actually to pray for an individual even if his needs are known ? Here are a few of different ways that could be recommended. We can first break away from the idea that prayer must always be verbal. To hold a picture in one’s mind of another’s need, and to do this consciously in God’s presence is often a genuine form of prayer. In my imagination I climb the staircase of the office (or of the sick-room) and enter where my friend is ; I picture what he is likely to be doing, what his anxieties or difficulties are likely to be. I picture as vividly as I can my presence with him and Christ’s presence with me. And I just say in my heart : “ There,

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that's what I want help for. You know what's best, and I'm sure what's best will be," or simply, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Or, having made my picture, I cannot do better than say over the Lord's Prayer with the special intention of applying it phrase by phrase to my friend. If this seems rather difficult the intercessor should make the necessary verbal alterations: "Thy kingdom come through him; Thy will be done in him; give him day by day his daily bread; forgive him his trespasses and help him to forgive any who have been his enemies."

The best means which we can offer to God for the accomplishment of His Will is ourselves. The best prayer I can make for the waywardness of another is my own greater readiness to obey.¹ When praying for some improvement of character or some spiritual gift for another I may well ask myself how I can be sure that I am asking for the right thing; my own sense of values may be blunted; my prayer may be perverted in its direction by "pet virtues" of my own. This ground has been covered in a previous chapter in reference to the importance of unbiassed vision in spiritual advisers. The intercessor, following out some similar line of thought, may be led to pray earnestly for guidance and improvement for himself. He is brought to face the possibility that his own sin, his own imperfections, render him unable

¹ *Fellowship in Prayer*. Mrs Porter. Published by Mowbray.

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to pray for another as he desires. His own longing for better things in himself, his offer of himself again to God is in itself as good an intercession as he can offer for another soul's welfare. "For their sakes I sanctify myself."

This last method of intercession is valuable for many; it forms a bridge to other prayer and explains in part why the advice to "pray for other people if you have no interest in prayers for yourself" is often given; it helps to keep prominent the idea of the obligation on the intercessor to serve the object of his prayers in some other way as well. A life of intercession is a road to Calvary; it is a cross, but a cross which is creative as was the Passion of our Lord. But this method is obviously inadvisable where the work of intercession is recommended as, in part, a means of drawing the spiritual introvert from an interest in his own spiritual condition to an interest in other people's lives. He must not be encouraged to slip back into a preoccupation with his own spiritual affairs.

F. Rule of Life

Some reasons have already been given why a rule of life may be a help. Here again we are confronted by the difficulty that the very phrase itself suggests the expert devotee. For there are Communities and Associations whose rule of life seems very severe to the beginner; it is admirably suited to religious people, but not nearly so well

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suited to the person who would like to be more truly religious but starts in a very elementary stage. On the other hand, to promise "to pray to God every day and to do something to help forward the work of the Church" is for many people rather too vague. Yet it is clearly a help in adopting a rule of life to do so in company; to have the incentive which comes from the knowledge that other people are doing exactly the same thing and consider themselves bound by the same promise.

But very often the beginner can be best helped by a rule of life which is his own and applies just to his own spiritual need. I am convinced that we often make the mistake of trying to fit people into things—movements, religious societies and so forth—misled, as we often are, by the fatal lure of uniformity, and forgetting that people's circumstances and temperament are of such great variety. What we ought to be doing very often instead, is to fit the idea to the person. The Church itself is quite sufficiently hedged round with conditions and restrictions; there are many respects in which we may not do other—even if we would—than fit the person into the mould. Let us beware of multiplying the moulds through which the pilgrim must pass, once he has qualified as a Church member. For there are very many people who cannot pass through them at all and are discouraged from further development because the moulds which are offered to them don't and won't fit. Thus what is here said about a rule of life applies

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simply to those people who need more individual consideration.

The rule must not be vague, that is the first thing. It represents an attempt to translate principle into detail, *e.g.*, not: "I will be more regular in prayer"; that is vague; in weak moments it will mean very little, or will appear in different moods to mean very different things. One of the objects of a rule is to protect us from the influence of moods. The rule must be explicit, *e.g.*: "I will pray at least . . . minutes each day." The next thing is that a rule should tend to represent a minimum rather than a maximum. This may be put in one of two different ways according to the character of the person advised. Either, "Be careful to choose something that will really cause you some effort; it must not be too easy; it must make some demands upon you. Yet be sure that whatever you choose to put down in the rule *is possible*; remember that you are drawing up a rule of life which you mean to keep." Or, "Don't put down the maximum, that which ideally you would like to do; but rather the minimum, that below which under no circumstances will you allow yourself to drop. At some future time you can raise your minimum."

That is another important point. The rule of life is not to be static; it is a guide for the time being. He who makes it will be advised to review, and perhaps to alter it "next Easter" or "in a year's time." A rule of life may consist of many

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points, but one at least (and it may be the only item) should refer to the devotional life. But the same governing ideas, mentioned above, should be applied to every item in the rule. It should not refer to a besetting sin except in a very positive way ; *e.g.*, not "I will not fritter away my time," but "I will finish with the *Times* by 9.30 a.m." or "On five days in the week I will do at least one hour's serious study." The person who is anxious to do so may use the rule of life to illustrate certain principles, the statement of which on the same piece of paper may prove helpful. But these must not be embodied in the rule but written separately, *e.g.*, "Wishing to be more unselfish at home and to think less of myself and to make a better use of God's gifts to me I undertake, with His help, to keep the following rule of life."

The undertaking may be for a limited period, *e.g.*, three months, and that should then be stated. Or someone will wish to experiment with the rule a week or so before actually undertaking it. It is well for the adviser never to press the adoption of a rule of life on the occasion when the idea is first broached. Let the person think it over and perhaps send in draft suggestions so that advice may be obtained as to their probable soundness. The final draft should be dated and signed by the person making the rule and if he wishes may be countersigned by the adviser or some other friend.

There are other and more usually recommended methods of rule of life and intercession, of self-

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examination and of the devotional use of the Bible. The purpose of much in this chapter has been not so much to supersede other methods as to add alternatives, and to emphasize for the last time the need of helping the enquirer to find what is for him, as an individual, the best way.

CHAPTER IX

SOME CONCLUSIONS

IN so far as the clergy have been or are being inadequately trained in spiritual therapeutics, the remedy is not very easy to define. Certainly the theological colleges are not the places of which to make the first demand for improvement. As the curriculum of the public school, in its upper divisions, is governed inevitably by the requirements of Honours Schools at the University, so the principals of Theological Colleges have their work cut out to prepare their students for the examinations set by a higher authority. Even if any one principal agreed that there existed the sort of need described in this book he could do very little to meet it. The standard of general cultural education which forms the foundation for the more specialized training for Holy Orders has fallen since the war. This means more work for every one, including a large number of the candidates themselves. It would, therefore, not be surprising if the principals of theological colleges had become permanently proof against appeals from outside bodies or individuals to admit a special visitor to speak on this, or to arrange for lectures to be given on that. The curriculum is sufficiently full.

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To what extent the diocesan bishops actively control the whole of the examination set for Deacon's Orders I do not know in detail. But ultimately the degree to which candidates for the ministry will have any grounding in spiritual therapeutics or in the subjects necessary to it depends upon what their bishops, partly by examination, expect and demand. For it is the bishops who really call the tune, and it is for them to decide whether the time has not come to change the tune or reharmonize it.

Probably post-ordination instruction is the method which offers most hopeful prospects. Such continued education would need to be compulsory, and once schools for junior clergy or set courses of lectures were on the horizon "spiritual therapeutics" would find itself an "also ran" amongst a variety of other competing claims. Ignoring a great many of these competitors as actually of less importance in the life and work of the clergy, we may consider for a moment the place of theology in this connection. Theology is the proper study of the clergy; our standard in it is doubtless lower than it should be. But it is open to question whether a higher standard in academic theology will equip us much better for our main task as clergy. What we need even before this improved standard in theology is a greater ability to make effective use of the theology which we already have. Theology as learnt by the clergy, as written in the books which we are supposed to read, needs a large measure of re-translation before it is any real use to lay people.

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This interpretation is no simple matter, particularly if no hint is conveyed to the student that interpretation is necessary and no guidance is given in the task.

The need for such interpretation will become obvious to anyone who will pick up any strictly theological work and read a couple of pages. What the ordinary person requires of us is not "theories of the Atonement" with an appreciation of Dun Scotus, but an intelligible answer to the question: "Can *my* sins be forgiven? How? Why?" And an answer in the form of theological phrases, of religious clichés is very little use. We may need more theology; but some of us already have on board a good deal of theological cargo which makes the ship roll and is unloaded at intervals upon respectful but somewhat bemused congregations. Doctrine in terms of life to-day; an application of theology to Christian practice—these are badly needed. I am not suggesting a pragmatic defence of the Christian Faith, an attempt to argue its truth from any demonstration of its usefulness. But many people who have got past the stage of serious intellectual difficulties and are quite ready to accept a creed are to be found asking themselves and others the question: "Are Christians any the better for it? I'm quite ready to accept it all, but some of it seems quite irrelevant." If raising the standard of the clergy's theology means adding to the amount of more or less irrelevant theological knowledge which they already

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possess without adequate guidance in its interpretation and application—then it will not meet our greatest need, as I see it.

One of the most burning practical questions is the equipment of clergy as adequate confessors. If any priest should become convinced by what he had read here that it is his duty to hear Confessions and indeed to recommend the practice to those who obviously need it, it is well that he should understand that the technique of this ministry is not fully set forth in this book, and that he has other things about it to learn. For others who have no initial prejudice to overcome it has been suggested that only those priests should be allowed to hear Confessions who have received the Bishop's license to do so. Any such scheme is, practically, impossible. As, most unfortunately, this ministry forms part of the battle-ground of ecclesiastical controversy, Anglo-Catholics would not for a moment entertain the idea of equipping the individual bishop with a virtual power of veto on the practice of Confession. But even if this obstacle did not exist, the method suggested could hardly be adopted. The priest, by virtue of his ordination, holds the commission of the whole Church to pronounce absolution, and this function can scarcely be curtailed by episcopal action subsequently.

But on the assumption that many deacons immediately after attaining the priesthood will start hearing Confessions, the bishop has a right to demand either that this ministry shall not be

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exercised for some time or that those wishing to perform it shall satisfy him beforehand that they are at least reasonably competent. This merely brings us back to what has just been said about the part to be played by the bishops in securing that those whom they ordain to the sacred ministry of the Church shall be equipped properly to do the work to which they are called ; and that in this equipment some form of obligatory continued education would be found necessary.

The situation in the Church, as I see it, will not be met simply by the provision in each diocese of one clergyman, or more, to act as expert consultant. At least it depends upon the use to which such men would be put. It is clear that many clergy would find it a great advantage, when dealing with a personal situation which presented special difficulties, to know of someone to whom they could confidently refer for advice. This would be obtained either as advice to the clergyman in need of it, or by interview between the special adviser and the person in need of help. The latter alternative, when it could be arranged, would be the more frequent occurrence ; in bodily sickness few doctors will consent to diagnose or to prescribe at second-hand. In moral and spiritual difficulties a second-hand application of general principles to an unknown person, in the form of diagnosis or prescription, is often, though not always difficult and risky.

The consultant, intended for the above purpose, need not hold a staff-position in the diocese ; indeed

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he would often most suitably be himself a parish priest. But whether he were this or not he would need to be someone who was himself "practising"; the value of the theoretical expert who is not himself in contact with ordinary people and trying to help them is liable to decrease rapidly. He would obviously obtain more general confidence and thus be more generally useful if, while himself a confessor, he did not insist upon this or any other formula. Equally the diocesan need not give him any special title, but would take opportunities of telling the clergy that so-and-so, without being infallible, was likely to be helpful in advising about personal dealings with individual people. The man selected for this work would very often be the person chiefly responsible, under the bishop, for arranging post-ordination instruction.

There are some who wish to see much more than this done, but, if agreed, it would take longer, and I have therefore put in the forefront the first step which could be immediately taken in many dioceses. The more distant project would be to secure the equipment of the Church with men really entitled to the description "expert"; men, I mean, whose practical experience and natural gifts had been reinforced by a solid foundation of study in moral and ascetic theology and in psychology. But it would need to be a new moral and ascetic theology, grounded most certainly in the experience of the Catholic Church, but not a mere rehash of unadapted and undeveloped mediæ-

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valism. It is to the universities that we must look in the first place for laying these foundations. Our second look involves a suggestion which has a much wider range than the particular subject under discussion.

In the Church of England we have no organization for selecting and training men for specialized work not only in this but in any department. Supposing that it is noticed at the university or theological college that an ordination candidate shows some signs of a particular aptitude, the information may—or may not—reach the ordaining bishop. It may—or may not—be noticed by the man's first or second vicar ; its development may easily be thwarted or obscured by the nature of the general work which a man has to do. With luck at the age of thirty-five, forty-five, or (more probably) fifty-five it becomes clear to someone or other that the man has a special aptitude for something or other and he is then concentrated upon it ; but by then very often the opportunity has passed of making the most both of his development and of his usefulness.

The turn of events would be much less wasteful if there were a real General Headquarters of the Church of England with an efficient Intelligence Department. A list might be drawn up—and altered from time to time—of certain specializations of which the Church stood most in need. University and theological college teachers would be asked to report to the central Intelligence any man

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who showed symptoms of an aptitude specially required. The department would not lose sight of him ; the possibility would be communicated not only to his diocesan bishop but also to the vicar under whom the man went to work. These would be asked to give special opportunities, if possible, for the development of the latent gift, and to report upon progress if any. Let us suppose that the hopes entertained were not falsified. After ten years (or less or more) in Holy Orders that man would be known to the authorities of the Church ; when a post in some diocese fell vacant his name would be recommended to the bishop or appointing body. We should be delivered from the present lack of method, of which I now quote one out of many deplorable examples which have come within my own personal knowledge.

A priest of good organizing ability and with more than the average amount of mental initiative was offered, by the providence of God, a post in which his particular gifts were badly needed and could acquire full scope. He accepted it and for some years put in first-rate work at it. Then he decided, and for quite sufficient reasons, that he had made to it the best contribution he could give, that his own spiritual welfare and possibilities of future self-expression in service demanded a change of sphere, and that his present position would benefit by a change of occupant. He therefore resigned. But the post he had been filling was extra-diocesan, though very definitely work for

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the Church of England. Thus no one was responsible for him. He had been doing work as a specialist organizer, but the Church has no labour exchange for the further employment of such people. About that time I happened to meet a bishop who wanted to fill a post in his diocese with a man of just the kind of gifts and experience possessed by my friend. Of course I may have been wrong in thinking so, but that does not matter. The point is that, even if I had been right, there was no appointed channel through which that man and that bishop could be put into touch with each other.

The end of the story has point. The man looked round for a job, and, because he was a man of ability, eventually secured one. It was not, I think, the ideal one, not the job to which a Church following any considered plan, would have called him or invited him at that juncture. But doubtless he did good work there, and at any rate it was bread and butter. The cause for lament in this account is not pity for the man himself; in such circumstances that is only a minor tragedy. What mattered was the loss to the Church. Here was a man who had proved himself possessed of certain gifts above the average; after general experience—parochial and other—there was a specialized experience which should have made his future work for the Church the concern of some central authority equipped with the knowledge of where such men were most needed. But he was allowed to drift

SOME CONCLUSIONS

into whatever he could find. In an oil company, an army, a school—such mismanagement would spell disaster within a generation.

It is true that the present Archbishop of Canterbury with his innumerable personal contacts, his intense interest in individual people and his unique knowledge, does a very great deal which prevents the Church suffering all the bad results of the present lack of system. But the problem is far too big and complex for any one man, even him, to deal with completely, and when he ceases to be Primate his successor cannot possibly be so well equipped for this particular duty. Only one reason has been given for the hope that before or as a result of "Lambeth, 1930," a G.H.Q. for the Church of England may be formed; it is that there may be an Intelligence Department which shall do something towards securing the right specialists which the Church may need. There are other reasons as weighty, but they do not find a place here.

Each man who has a particular idea tends to think that of supreme importance. I do not wish to claim exclusive or first place for the better training of clergy in spiritual therapeutics; there are other things to be considered. And those other things are being considered; this about which I have written in this book, does not seem yet to command the attention which the circumstances warrant. The circumstances may be briefly summarized:—

(a) The battle which Christianity will have to

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

fight in the next fifty years will be, in my opinion, in the moral sphere as during the last fifty years it has been rather in the intellectual sphere. Christian standards or supposed standards of conduct will be more and more challenged not only in individual but also in social ethics; the latter have hardly been referred to in this book, but they are of immense importance in the vocation of the Christian preacher and teacher.

(b) A rigid Catholicism in morals will continue to attract large numbers of people who demand infallibilities in Christian practice as in matters of faith. But the proportion of those who will be satisfied with the imposition of moral infallibilities will steadily decrease.

(c) Neither the amateur nor the dealer in formulas will satisfy an increasingly intelligent generation, many of whom already suspect that the care of souls is more efficiently administered by others than the clergy.

(d) Unless something is done the suspicion will increase to certainty, so that in fifty years' time the fact that a man is a clergyman will not, of itself, be a passport into individual confidence, and our grandchildren will not suppose that the clergy have anything to do with spiritual well-being except as those who, by their office, can alone provide the sacraments. Unless this is to be summarily dismissed as a wild fancy, we had better cease to drift.

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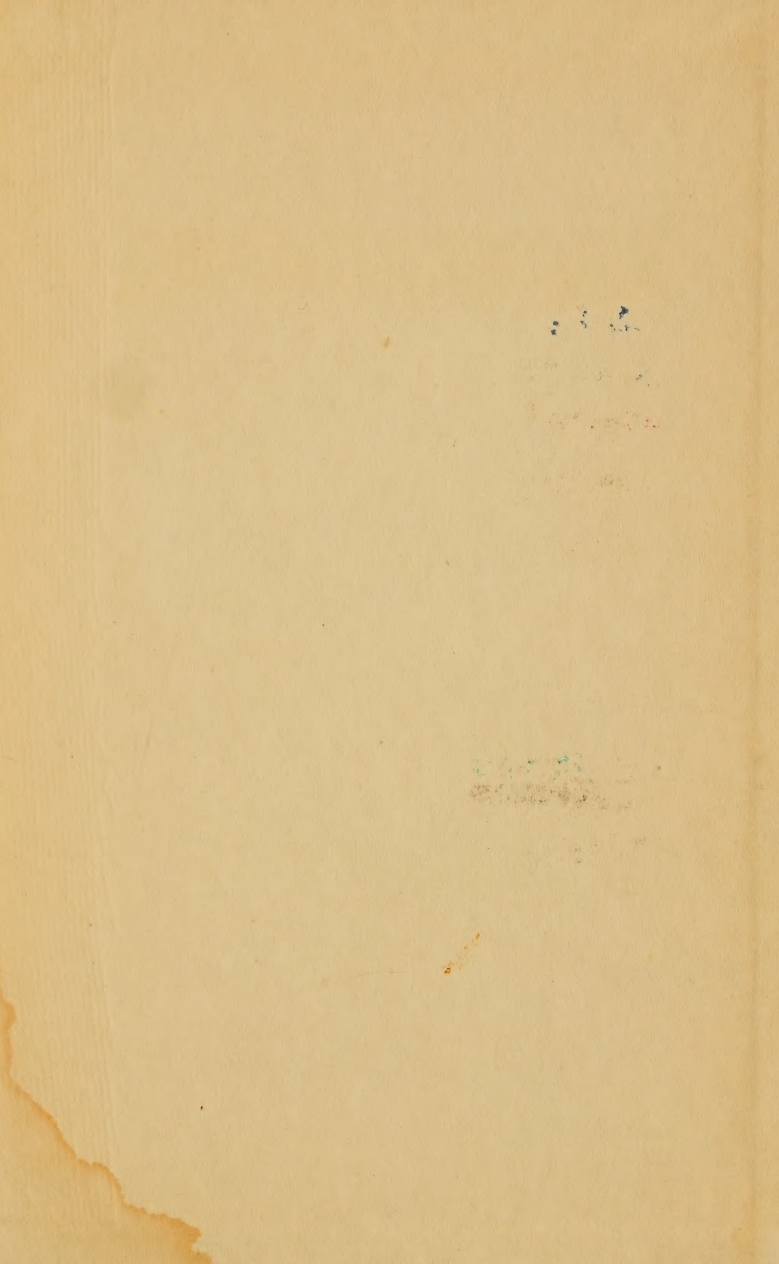
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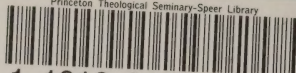
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